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ABSTRACT

This document profiles selected people, programs, and ideas highlighted by Australia's Adult Learners Week 2001 and begins with these papers: "Adult Learners Week: A National Celebration" (Ned Dennis); "A Message from the Adult Learners Week Patron" (Peter Hollingworth); "A Message of Support from the Prime Minister of Australia" (John Howard); and "A Message from the Chief Executive Officer of ANTA (Australian National Training Authority)" (Moira Scollay). Part 1, which explores the issues facing adult education in Australia, contains the following papers: "Challenges and Opportunities of a New Learning Framework" (Tony Brown); "No Worries for Australian Learners?" (Bill Lucas); and "A Learning Society: What Will It Be Like and How Will We Get There?" (Geraldine Doogue). Part 2, presents the following shortlist entries from the Adult Learners Week 2001 Collins Booksellers Writing Competition: "My Life as a Loser" (Kirstie D'Souza); "And Andrew Said" (Bill Clohesy); "Women's Work" (Megan Chappell); "Rejuvenation" (Megan Rowe); "An Autumn Flower" (Elizabeth Cooke); "Adult Learning, My Experience" (Joan Darnell); "Desire to Ride" (Greg Bogaerts); "Evening Classes" (Rananda Rich); "Self Taught" (Tony Smith); "Zak's Words" (Carmel Williams); "Gathering Momentum" (Andrea Mettenmeyer); "Learning to Read" (Catherine James); and "I'm No Philosopher But..." (Frances Overheu). Part 3 profiles the following outstanding learning facilitators: Cathy Rainey; Jason Learner; Lorna Crane; Jane Brown; Ros Butcher; Joan Johnson; and Robyn Ellis. Part 4 contains the following papers on outstanding learning programs: "Bachelor Survival--What Shall I Cook Tonight?"; "Why Learning Circles? The Methodology and Its Benefits"; "From Spice Racks to Homes: The Transportable Homes Project"; "Let's Play Fair: Helping Adults to Create Positive Environments for Children"; "Getting

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Community Volunteer Learning Right: The Skills for Nature Conservation Program"; "Another Chance: Tasmanian Prison Services Education and Training Program"; and "Tiwi Music Program." Part 5 contains the following papers on outstanding learning providers: "Strengthening Communities--Boyup Brook Telecentre"; "Melbourne Museum and Adult Learning"; "The Old and the New: Lifelong Learning through Radio and the Internet"; "A National Training Centre: Booroongen Djugun College"; "Creating a Learning Community: Morrison House Inc"; "Smart Geelong: The Learning City"; and "Addressing Adult Learners' Needs: Kangan Batman TAFE (Technical and Further Education)." Part 6 summarizes the major activities of Adult Learners Week 2001. (MN)

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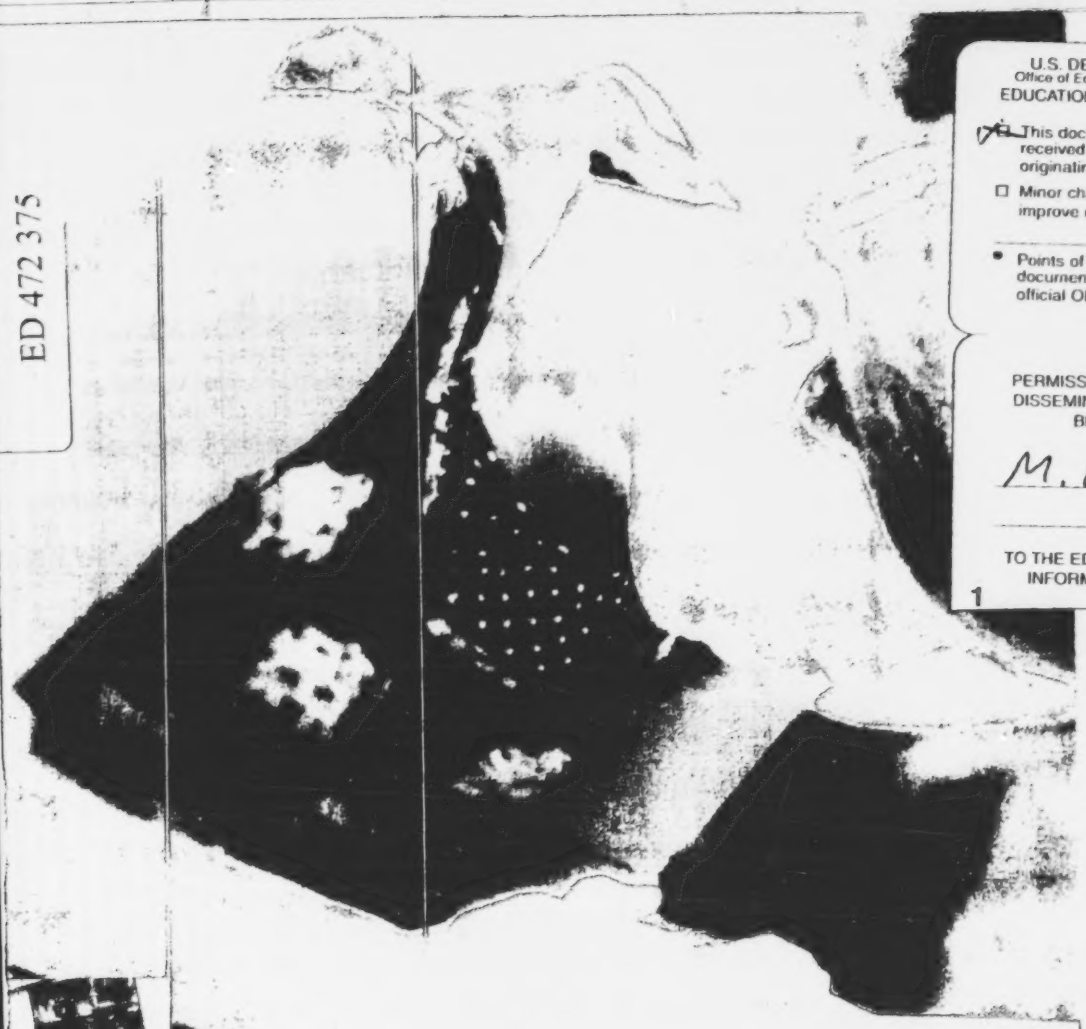

making the connection

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making the connection

some people, programs and ideas highlighted by adult learners week 2001

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ADULT LEARNERS WEEK
A NATIONAL CELEBRATION

In 2001 Australia celebrated its seventh Adult Learners Week. An opportunity to focus on the achievement and the potential of all forms of adult learning in Australia. Adult Learners Week 2001 was the most successful ever staged in this country.

Most Adult Learners Week activities are presented by learning providers – ACE Centres, neighbourhood houses, community colleges, telecentres, community groups, museums, TAFEs and so on – from around the country. Using promotional resources supplied by Adult Learning Australia, and, in some cases, grants administered by state or territory governments, local providers use the Week to present and highlight a range of activities that give their local community an opportunity to discover the learning experiences that are available to everyone.

The Week is co-ordinated at a national level by Adult Learning Australia, the peak body for adult learning providers and facilitators and a voice for adult learners. The main role at this level is to decide, in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, the key themes for the Week, to manage the communications strategy, and to provide information resources for Adult Learners Week co-ordinators around the country.

Ned Dennis, Chair of the Adult Learners Week 2001 National Coordinating Committee speaking at the National Launch, National Museum of Australia, Canberra.
(photo: Eddie Misic)

The national co-ordination team is responsible for staging some key Adult Learners Week activities as well, such as the National Launch. This year, the National Launch was held in Canberra and the Week was officially launched by Dr Peter Hollingworth, AC OBE Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia and the Patron of Adult Learners Week. Other key activities co-ordinated by Adult Learning Australia at a national level included the management of the two national awards and the staging of the national ALW seminar. Focusing on a Learning Society and asking the questions "what will it look like?" and "how will we make it happen?", a highlight of the seminar was a lively open forum moderated by ABC presenter, Geraldine Doogue.

The national co-ordination team was also responsible for the tour of two international guest speakers: Bill Lucas, Executive Director of the Campaign for Learning (UK), and Wesley Payne McClendon, Jr., a former adviser to the Clinton Government on literacy issues and an organisational change consultant.

Each state and territory has its own Adult Learners Week Coordinator, who, in partnership with state-based organisations, arranges state launches, award ceremonies and gives the national campaign a regional focus.

While we have no way of recording how many people actually participate

in ALW events, there were some good signs of increased participation in 2001. The number of entries to the Collins Booksellers Writing and the Ricoh Photo Competitions was outstanding, with entries coming from the Tiwi Islands in Australia's far north, to Bruny Island in Tasmania. Usage of the Website shot up too, almost doubling from the previous year, and calls to the 1300 phone number rose steadily towards the Week. We have received many reports from around the country of successful, well attended Adult Learners Week activities – open days, exhibitions, shopping centre displays, free classes and lots more.

By all measures, Adult Learners Week is achieving considerable recognition for itself and, through its activities, for adult learning as a concept generally. An AC Nielsen survey, conducted by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) as part of a formal evaluation of Adult Learners Week, has revealed that one in four Australians were aware of the term, 'Adult Learners Week', with around 1 in five aware of this year's ALW publicity. The study also revealed that for 55% of the Australian adult population adult learning has a 'high appeal', while 39% feel that adult learning is 'of some interest'. This is heartening news for everyone working in the adult learning sector.

The Week has been able to achieve market penetration far in excess of what might be expected given the tiny budgets that are involved at all levels of co-ordination. All the people who have worked so tirelessly to present Adult Learners Week activities over the years can be proud of the status that the Week now holds within Australia.

This book contains some of the best ideas, people and programs to have come to the fore during Adult Learners Week 2001. Here you'll find some of the best entries in the Collins Booksellers Writing Competition and in the Ricoh Photo Competition. You will also find profiles of some of the Adult Learners Week award winners from around the country. The book has been conceived to serve as a resource for inspiration and ideas that has a relevance well beyond the actual timeframe of Adult Learners Week.

Adult Learners Week 2002 will take place 2-8 September. Once again the Week will provide an opportunity for everyone to celebrate, promote and advance all forms of adult learning in Australia. Nobody needs an invitation to become involved, anyone can present or participate in an Adult Learners Week activity, and the National and State co-ordinators are there to help.

Ned Dennis

President, Adult Learning Australia and Chair, Adult Learners Week 2001 National Coordinating Committee

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For more information about Adult Learners Week visit www.adultlearnersweek.org, or phone 1300 303 212. For contact details of any organisations featured in this book, call the National Adult Learners Week Coordinator on 02 6251 9887.

A MESSAGE FROM THE ADULT LEARNERS WEEK PATRON

His Excellency the Right Reverend Dr Peter Hollingworth AC OBE Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

As Governor-General, and as the National Patron of Adult Learners Week 2000, I am very pleased to send this message of support and goodwill to all those participating in its various activities.

Adult Learners Week is a time to celebrate and promote adult learning and education in Australia. It aims to encourage more adult Australians to continue to develop their knowledge and skills, by changing the common perception that learning ceases with the end of school or University.

Adult Learners Week highlights the diverse places where adults learn. The classroom, the campfire, the club, the sewing group, the farm, the toolshed, kitchen, library, gallery, neighbourhood centre, zoo, and computer are all places where learning is occurring.

Adult Learners Week patron, His Excellency the Right Reverend Dr Peter Hollingworth AC OBE launches Adult Learners Week at the National Museum of Australia, Canberra. (photo: Eddie Misic)

Australians have a positive attitude to learning associating it with words like 'discovery', 'finding out new things', and 'working with others'. The Week celebrates the achievements of adults who have continued with their learning or who have returned to learning, often overcoming obstacles on the way. Their achievements serve to inspire others to follow their example and chart their own learning journey.

Lifelong learning is becoming increasingly important in a world subject to constant change, whether in terms of technology, the economy, or society in general. If Australia is to capitalise on such change, then it is essential that all Australians remain open to new ways of doing things – and this entails a recognition that we will be learning throughout our lives.

The value of lifelong learning not only benefits the individual; it extends to the family and the next generation, and enhances involvement in the local community and the wider society. Adult learning can help to create employment opportunities. It can help people in their own personal development and enable them to make new friends.

We need therefore also to ensure that learning opportunities are available to all Australians so that some are not left behind in the information age and the knowledge economy. Those who have had negative learning experiences in the past in particular need encouragement to take that first step back.

We have many issues confronting us as Australians that can only benefit from reasoned and informed discussion, from learning together.

I wish Adult Learners Week well, and to all those involved in the wide range of activities, forums, debates and celebrations I wish you every success.

Peter Hollingworth

Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

A MESSAGE OF SUPPORT FROM THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA

Mr John Howard

It gives me great pleasure to send greetings to participants in Adult Learners Week from 2 – 8 September 2001.

I understand that Adult Learners Week is now an international event with Australia one of over 40 countries participating in the first International Adult Learners Week in 2000. This year participants in Australia will celebrate a second international week by taking part in a range of diverse and challenging activities based on the theme of lifelong learning and Australia as a learning society.

Adult Learners Week is organised by Adult Learning Australia, the peak organisation for adult and community education providers. The Association undertakes a range of activities including an annual national conference and facilitating a number of special interest networks focused on people with disabilities and cross-cultural education. The Association's work is supported by many Australians from all walks of life who recognise the value of formal and informal learning throughout an individual's lifetime and who share an ongoing passion for learning. In an increasingly complex modern society a commitment to lifelong learning benefit both individuals and Australia as a whole.

I send my best wishes to everyone involved in Adult Learners Week 2001 and wish you success in your future learning endeavours.

John Howard

Prime Minister of Australia

Adult Learners Week patron and Governor General of Australia, Dr Peter Hollingworth, meets members of an Adult Migrant English Service (AMES) class at the National Launch of Adult Learners Week 2001, National Museum of Australia, Canberra. (photo: Eddie Misic)

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF ANTA

MOIRA SCOLLAY

Moira Scollay (centre) speaks with Bill Lucas at the Adult Learners Week 2001 seminar. (photo: John Cross)

One of the Australian National Training Authority's roles is to help develop a nation in which our people are passionate about and committed to lifelong learning. This is what Adult Learners Week celebrates and ANTA is pleased to offer its support to this book which recognises Adult Learners Week 2001.

Lifelong learning is a familiar concept to adult and community education (ACE) but wider recognition of its importance to the knowledge society is new. Better engagement of industry in the lifelong learning agenda should be a priority.

I see our vision like this: Australia is a learning society. The nation's enterprises, individuals and communities participate in lifelong learning because they understand the benefits include a highly skilled workforce and a stronger economic performance, a more inclusive society and a stronger democracy, and a more personally rewarding life.

From the perspective of Australia's prosperity in the 21st century and our social coherence, businesses, individuals, institutions and governments within community partnerships must deeply value skills, knowledge and lifelong learning.

Moira Scollay

Chief Executive Officer
Australian National Training Authority

PART 1

ISSUES FACING ADULT LEARNING IN AUSTRALIA

HALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF A NEW LEARNING FRAMEWORK

By Tony Brown, (Former) Executive Director, Adult Learning Australia

Celebrating individual and group achievement is a cornerstone of Adult Learners Week. Numerous inspirational examples attesting to the fact that learning can change lives are recognised during the Week and many are recorded in this book.

At first sight they may not seem to be grand achievements. Yet for the individuals concerned they can often represent a turning point. The new connections made from overcoming poor literacy or numeracy such as being able to read a story to your child, the sense of self-esteem gained from completing a course that had seemed daunting, tackling the internet and communicating with friends overseas, a group coming together to chart their own learning about indigenous and white Australian history in order to make a difference. These and other examples become the focus of attention during the Week.

They provide a glimpse of the practical outcomes of adult education and learning. But at the same time the Week offers an

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opportunity to reflect on whether our learning systems are appropriate for the 21st century. Do they meet the challenges confronting education, and Australia more generally?

The advent of the 21st century brought a chorus of pronouncements that 'the information society' both requires and makes possible new forms of education. The sense of being on the brink of something all together is captured in phrases like the 'information age', the 'knowledge revolution' and so on.

Translating these declarations into reality, however, has proved to be difficult. It would be too easy to put this slow progress down to a lack of money, technology, standards or teacher training. Obviously there is need for improvement in all of those areas, but the main problem is something different. It is a shortage of bold, coherent, inspiring visions of what education could be like 10 and 20 years from now.

This doesn't mean that we need a blueprint – because blueprints are prescribed outcomes. What's needed is a view of the 'look and feel' of the future. Visioning equips us to look beyond the immediate problems by giving direction to the future. It also inspires and guides action. This conversation needs to be more than looking to new technologies to solve current problems because the technology becomes the focus rather than looking at new opportunities to develop learning. Technology is not a fix for the old; it is a powerful means of supporting new forms of learning to serve higher levels of expectation than currently exist.

CHALLENGES OF PARTICIPATION

The main challenges involved in responding to these new demands are not too different from earlier times. They involve questions of participation, access, equity and quality. They may not be that different but perhaps they are more pressing.

During the Week we raised three crucial issues of participation. They were the disturbing numbers of adults, with no interest or intention to undertake any form of structured learning once they had left school, the very high rates of inadequate literacy and numeracy among adults, a figure of 44% according to the International Adult Literacy Survey; and the declining school retention rate where three out of every ten school students don't complete Year 12.

If we are indeed entering, or have entered, the information age then these figures give cause for serious concern.

An OECD review of issues concerning adult learning and participation can also offer pointers for Australia. The review is focussed on:

- How to improve access and encourage new participants
- How can government, industry, unions and civil society organisations improve the incentives and motivation for adults to learn?
- How a more integrated approach to education systems can be developed?
- Improving the quality and variety of teaching and learning
- Improving policy effectiveness and coherence

LEARNING OUR WAY OUT

Education is about doing courses, gaining qualifications, deepening knowledge, and improving skills. Learning is more. Learning is a process of discovery aimed at understanding the breadth and depth of our individual and collective world so that we can participate more fully as social beings. And so adult learning operates in a social and economic environment that in turn shapes it.

This environment presents a number of specific challenges including:

- significant changes in the organisation of work, in patterns of and participation in employment, and for many the difficulty involved in securing employment
- the widening gap between rich and poor and rural and urban Australians
- an ageing population
- early retirement and conversely later retirement
- the nature of national identity in the 21st century and improving our understanding of our history and place in the region
- reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians
- developing a sustainable environmental future
- increasing use of information and communication technology and the Internet
- scientific and medical advances that raise new moral and ethical issues

What should we be looking for? How can education and learning that is aimed at the general adult population respond? We need to conceive of a new learning ecology that recognises the diversity of sites and motivations for learning and because of that eschews a narrow educational agenda in favour of a broad one.

'From Pillar to Post' – Shortlisted entry in the ALW2001 Ricoh Australia Photo Competition (Photo: Con Eremidis, Vic)

A new ecology will see new institutions, systems, styles and delivery mechanisms being recognised or developed. It should take as a starting point the following:

- A learning society is increasingly real, combining formal and new forms of informal learning.
- Extensive informal learning is not registered through formal education providers and much individual and collective learning is unrecognised even by the participants.
- Collective recognition of this learning could lead to people more fully valuing their own learning capacities as well as those of other groups.

- Informal learning needs to taken into account for more responsive further education opportunities.
- The scope of informal learning includes the knowledge of many people who have been excluded from continuing education in the past, notably working class people, older people, indigenous people and the disabled. Among these groups there is a demand for recognition of their prior learning.
- Recognising household, community work and informal learning can bridge the gap between paid work and adult education and lead to a sustainable knowledge society.
- Accompanying the growth of learning is a substantial learning divide where many remain un-motivated and disinterested.
- Meeting new demands and redressing learning divide requires new cultures and relationships with other organisations.
- New community led initiatives – Learning Communities and Learning Circles – need new responses.

Adopting this approach will pose a number of challenges for the 'educational system' and those who work within it, but also presents much potential for extending learning opportunities.

The process of establishing new learning systems – a lifelong learning approach – must be ongoing. It will require patience and commitment. Lifelong learning can be the policy glue that connects those responses but it must mean extending learning opportunities to those adults who are currently discouraged, unmotivated or who face obstacles to re-commencing.

We need to think beyond educational sectors if we are to foster a learning culture.

Elizabeth Chong
Author, Teacher of Chinese Cooking, Consultant and regular cooking segment presenter on 'Good Morning Australia', Channel Ten

"I am constantly involved in informal adult learning and, as I learn, I give to others what I have learnt. One needs goals and challenges in order to stay really 'alive'. Routine is OK, but you can be deadly dull. Learning exercises the brain and imagination brings 'soul' to the person.

"Learning should be fun! It's surprising how much easier it is when you don't make heavy work of it. Don't pursue activities you really don't enjoy or have a real interest in. Follow your heart and your instincts."

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NO WORRIES FOR AUSTRALIAN LEARNERS?

During Adult Learners Week 2001, Dr Bill Lucas, Chief Executive of the UK Campaign for Learning and author of the best-selling book *Power Up Your Mind: Learn Faster Work Smarter*, was invited to tour Australia and share his ideas about building learning societies based upon his experiences in the United Kingdom. Here, Dr Lucas, shares his impressions of Australia's learning community and the challenges facing Australia as it seeks to build a stronger, more visible, adult learning culture.

As an international guest of Adult Learners Week I had a unique opportunity to sample the impressive range of activities on offer in Australia. I saw at first hand the different ways in which our two countries are handling the lifelong agenda and made many new friends. Here are just some of my impressions.

For someone used to an island where the longest distance is the 600 miles between John of Groats and Lands End, it is the size and diversity of Australia that first hits a visitor from Britain. Australia seems enormous, with each state seemingly as big as most countries in Europe.

Life in Northern Territory, where I started my journey, was almost tropically hot and steamy even in August, while in Perth I needed an overcoat to protect me from the late winter squalls. Yet even with this enormous scale, it seemed as if I was visiting a largely urban society. In Northern Territory I visited wonderful aboriginal art sites and was given a privileged insight into a culture that managed to speak to me from many years ago with a freshness and dignity that I have not experienced before.

During the course of the Week, in addition to countless radio interviews, I met with a large number people, from a range of learning communities, across five states. In Perth I spoke to policy makers, planners and university academics at a breakfast focussing on how to revitalise local communities through learning partnerships. In Adelaide I spoke to an audience of business people at an Industry Breakfast, where I talked about the "Business Case For Learning". Later that day I presented a talk on the "Irresistible Rise of Lifelong Learning" to members of the South Australian Centre for Lifelong Learning and Development as part of the City of Marion Learning Festival. In Geelong I met with a wide cross-section of the learning community who had come together through the 'SmartGeelong' Learning City initiative – there I talked about how we can switch people back on to learning.

In Sydney I spoke at the Adult Learners Week seminar, giving a progress report on developments in the United Kingdom. Also, while in Sydney, I spoke at a lunch organised by the NSW Board of Adult and Community Education (BACE). In Brisbane I addressed an enthusiastic group of Literacy Volunteers on the valuable role that I believe volunteers play in a learning society. Finally, I spent a day with staff from the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA), sharing with them some of the ideas and experiences we have had in the United Kingdom as we seek to build stronger learning environments, partnerships and communities.

Coming from a land where there has been enormous energy from government in the area of lifelong learning, workforce development, the knowledge economy and basic skills, I felt as if I was entering a world of very different political priorities.

There is certainly the beginning of a debate about lifelong learning. As the National Centre for Vocational Education Research put it in *New directions in Australia's skill formation* published last year: "If Australia is to maximise its economic potential, policies to further promote lifelong learning are the key direction for the future." In one of the many policy papers I encountered the challenge is articulated as follows: "The real question is how to turn all this activity into a genuine learning or training culture where continuous learning and new skills become the drivers of our economic future."

But, while there were people from many different sectors at many of the events to which I contributed, I was particularly struck by the absence of certain key elements. So, for example, I was under-whelmed by the involvement by business in the debate, despite the existence of some thinking about the Knowledge Nation. Significant also was the separation of much community-based education from the mainstream. This is in no way to denigrate this sector, indeed, one of the most enjoyable sessions of my trip involved some 100 voluntary literacy tutors in Brisbane.

In short, I found myself increasingly wanting to know what the big picture for all this activity was. It seemed that, on many occasions, we were really talking about "education" or "training" rather than "learning." All of which makes Adult Leaning Australia's call for a strategy for lifelong learning very timely in my view. Yet when I questioned many policy-makers, including two ministers, about the need for a national strategy, I frequently encountered variations on a theme of "No worries, Bill" and a rapid change of subject!

The theme of Adult Learners Week 2001 – "making connections" – was an excellent one, for it is exactly what is needed. Schools could connect more with colleges; business with educators; trainers with learners; the voluntary sector with the commercial world; trade unions with employers. These are easy things to say, especially when you are only a temporary visitor. I am sure that there would be huge added value to the whole lifelong learning project if closer collaboration could be established. I saw it in some of the learning communities I visited, but then only in a defined geographical area. I can't help but think that the holy grail that needs to be pursued is a combination of increased social cohesion alongside better and smarter economic performance. Lifelong learning is surely the key to this.

As well as listening to and watching my hosts, I was also bringing some new ideas in my travel bag. And it was for the ideas of family learning and learning to learn, both concepts at the heart of the Campaign for Learning's work, that I found most interest.

I hope very much that our idea of Family Learning Weekend – an annual weekend of informal learning activities run by libraries, museums, local communities and others in the UK over the second weekend in October – will be taken up by one or more States next year and included in Adult Learners Week.

During my trip I often spoke about "learnacy", the idea that learning is learnable. This is something that the Campaign for Learning is developing with Professor Guy Claxton here in UK schools. The word learnacy provoked some mirth (for presumably if you are good at learning to learn you must be a "learnatic"). We have not got the language right yet, but at least we are beginning to talk about the concept. And I was delighted to discover that there is already a real attempt to find out more about how we learn and how the brain works in some South Australian schools. Unless children leave schools with a love of learning and a real understanding about how they learn best then we are surely going to be

stuck with a deficit model of lifelong learning.

The final event of the week was a seminar hosted by ANTA, the Australian National Training Authority, in Brisbane. The topics of our discussion were 'The business case for learning' and 'The rise of lifelong learning in the UK'. It was here that I was most aware of some major differences between our two countries. As I described the idea of individual or company Learning Accounts and union learning reps, one delegate interjected that since neither employers or unions had understood the case for learning such an idea would be doomed to failure. While the case for workforce development is by no means well enough made, there is a much greater emerging consensus in the UK. I found colleagues at ANTA extremely receptive to new thinking about learning.

As I flew back home, I found myself thinking that we are indeed lucky that the Blair government is committed to lifelong learning. Jacques Delors famously said that: "Lifelong learning is the heartbeat of society". And in the UK I for one can feel the lifeblood is beginning to course through the veins of our body politic even if it is not yet reaching all its limbs. But in Australia, while the individuals I met were committed to and passionate about learning to a person, I often felt that I needed a stethoscope to hear the country's beating heart.

In fact, somewhere over Singapore, I began to wonder whether the "No worries" was really trying to say "Good idea, let's create a national strategy" or "It's a lot more complex than you think, Bill, go away and leave us in peace!"

You tell me!

Bill Lucas addressing the Industry Breakfast, Hilton Hotel, Adelaide. (photo: Mark Trumble)

A LEARNING SOCIETY WHAT WILL IT BE LIKE AND HOW WILL WE GET THERE?

In Australia, there is a great deal of rhetorical support for lifelong learning, from governments, business, educators. There is less progress in Australia towards translating this rhetoric into reality. Policy development continues to concentrate on existing educational and scientific institutions. There is little policy work on integrating the informal and formal learning. There is a widespread feeling that Australia is lagging behind most other comparable societies in developing policies and programs in the area of lifelong learning.

The Adult Learners Week 2001 seminar attempted to fill the policy vacuum by presenting participants with the questions: What will a learning society be like? and How will we get there?

What follows is an edited transcript of the open discussion component of the seminar which was facilitated by ABC Radio and Television presenter, Geraldine Doogue.

Geraldine Doogue

I propose to go first to the issue of definition. I'd like to hear how you define what you mean by 'learning' because I don't think we can get very far without a clear focus.

Bill Lucas, Chief Executive, Campaign for Learning (UK)

If I may challenge you on that... why should learning be the burden of great definition?

Anything that is worth having is going to be difficult to define. Give me a one liner on work, or love, or school, or marriage, or equality, for example. Things that are precious are difficult to define. So we shouldn't be defensive about the fact that lifelong learning is difficult to define, almost anything that we value falls into that camp.

I do believe however that we should be practical and realistic in the language we use about it, and this means using a whole host of different languages.

When talking to business, for example, we use the language of business. We advance a clear-headed business case for why we should be learning, and it's to do with competitive advantage, retaining and recruiting good people, relationships with employees, better relationships with customers, work-life balance, and dealing with change. It is very easy to do. It doesn't sound like adult and community education when I am speaking to this audience, but it is.

When I am talking to people from the world of Adult and Community Education, I replace each of the reasons for learning – or sub definitions of learning – given to business, with phrases such as 'realising talent', 'developing individual potential', 'social inclusion', neighbourhood renewal', social regeneration'...

Geraldine Doogue

Are you saying, then, that the effort to put boundaries around learning can be misplaced effort?

Bill Lucas

It certainly can.

We had a go in the UK and what you produce is a paragraph. Bits of this paragraph have been adopted by Government, the museum world, the library world and it turns up in policy documents. The paragraph reads:

"Learning is a process of active engagement with experience. It is what people do when they want to

make sense of the world. It may involve an increase in knowledge, or understanding. A deepening of values or the capacity to reflect. Effective learning will lead to change, development and a desire to learn more."

What happens is that you then get asked to reduce it to a sound bite, such as "learning is a process of discovery". Or else you can locate the description within environments.

Wesley Payne McClendon Jnr., Manager, Deloitte & Touche Consulting Group Change Leadership Practice (USA)

I have to go in the opposite direction here. It is often said that "less is more" and I think that is very applicable here. I think the more definitions we try to put on lifelong learning and education in general, the harder it is to sell to potential learners. The harder it is to come up with a product and I think that is the problem with education.

I talk about a "profit-centred" approach to education where, in effect, you have to have some product, some defined morsel of learning, that people can purchase.

While we may wrestle with this idea of education and what "it is" – and while this is a good debate to have –ultimately we need to figure out what value we put around lifelong learning in which to support it. According to the rest of the world, at the moment it seems value-less.

Jenny Morawska-Ahearn, General manager People & Performance, Westpac

I believe that you have to show tangible results – bottom line results. It may mean that, in fact, you leave out some of things you are doing. For example, you can say, with regards to learning, that "we see this benefit in shareholder return, we can see this effect on economic profit or impact" – if you can do some economic modelling against it – then you will start to get some shifts and changes.

We shy away from this. We say "we can't measure that stuff: this is about feelings and spirituality". My view is that you measure what you can measure and you blend the rest in. That way you will get you where you want to go.

If we try and be too purist we are not going to get there.

Glen Martin, CCH Publishing House

I think we need to be aware that people are at different levels of motivation and as such you need to run different agendas for different people.

But by focusing too much on the social capital argument there is a danger that you obscure people's basic belief that learning plays a part in a "good life". Most people who run the argument about learning for life, do it because it is a nice way to live, because they like learning, and I don't think you should lose that.

Unidentified speaker (1)

Education is many things to many people. For many, lifelong learning is a way to feel better about ourselves and to improve our self-image.

For a lot of people from disadvantaged areas of society, however, lifelong learning is a vehicle that allows them to participate in living. My idea of learning, then, is that it is essentially a means by which people can empower themselves to live.

Unidentified speaker (2):

For me lifelong learning is no different to the "Fit For Life" type campaigns. The latter exercises the body while the former exercises the mind.

In the end what drives you is something personal, so I don't think you can actually peg it to whether it is social or any other obligation.

Veronica Sheen, Deputy National Executive Director, Council on the Ageing

I'd like to come at this debate in terms of where lifelong learning *isn't* at the moment.

In terms of the work we have done with mature-aged unemployed people, what has become apparent is that there are glaring weaknesses in Australia's educational set up and out of that has come a certain awareness of what we need in terms of lifelong learning.

We have a generation of people who have come into their late forties and fifties where the labour market and economic systems are breaking down for them. And what isn't in place are the lifelong learning strategies that would help them move into the new labour market.

I think that we need to understand lifelong learning in terms of where it isn't.

Bill Lucas

A comment on measures...

Of course we have got to have measures – measures are really important – but how about adopting broader measures such as "living longer and healthier", that's a pretty interesting measure.

There are two sides to the coin: let's use them as our headings in any strategy work we do. One is "increased prosperity" and the second is "increased social justice". They are not mutually exclusive.

We have to be really careful when we talk about measures that we don't end up purely talking in cost analysis terms as this can lead to all sorts of ludicrous, "Yes Minister"-type outcomes. We've got to be careful to avoid rushing to the easy "quick-fix" measurements.

Jenny Moravska-Ahearn

I actually think that the measures are a means to an end and that social justice imperatives are just as important as economic ones. But what we need to acknowledge is that we are now in a value domain and as such we need to take a value stance. When you take a value stance your measures fall out of that naturally.

I believe firmly in social justice, but I think we are naive to say that social justice will win the argument. The only way we are going to get change is to market and sell our ideas in such a way that will get a result. We can't afford to be naive about political agendas. We have to avoid fluffiness and tie things down to something real and tangible.

If we get our value framework right and we can influence people in power, we will get change. If we are too naive, nothing will change and we will continue to have these debates and discussions for the next twenty years.

Robert Fitzgerald, Commissioner for Community Services, NSW

If you talk about lifelong learning it has to be pitched in terms of achievable outcomes. For example, what you have to sell to government is that you want a resource that will increase the skill of our workforce to be able to achieve a specified goal and that resource happens to be a lifelong learning regime.

I wouldn't necessarily talk about Australia as an "inclusive society" because too often we have seen governments play on exclusion, such as creating "the common enemy", as a deliberate political device. But what we can agree on is that we need greater participation, particularly from low income and socially disadvantaged people, in society generally. So you could argue that a lifelong learning strategy is a tool or resource that will enable such greater participation within society.

While it is important to have a national framework for lifelong learning – because such a framework will stop the duplication and wasting of resources – that's not how you can sell it to decision makers. You will need to sell it by showing that it is a tool or resource that will achieve a defined outcome in social and economic terms.

Elaine Henry, Chief Executive Officer, The Smith Family

With regard to strategies for getting things onto the main agenda, what you have to do is take a bit of the debate away and focus on facts. The more startling the better in a way.

You've also got to understand that things don't work in a linear way.

Another practical issue is the management of energy and resources. A good example of what happens in Australia was demonstrated with our suicide prevention work. After we started talking about the number of suicides in our society, what happened was that – because this is the way we work in Australia – we suddenly had multiple groups springing up and doing something. The result of this was that we dissipated all our strength by everybody getting funded to do little bits. Then we were faced with the problem of having to pull it all back together.

That might be the way we *have* to do it – I don't know, maybe we do have to have all these different things and then at some point down the track start to coalesce and get a proper framework...

Tony Brown, Executive Director, Adult Learning Australia

The genesis for some of the changes in Britain stemmed from identifying problems that were defined in terms of Britain's educational, employment and productivity performance as measured against that of other countries.

Elaine Henry (left), Jenny Morawska-Ahearn and Robert Fitzgerald at the Adult Learners Week 2001 Seminar. (photo: John Cross)

I think in Australia we are in a similar position now. We can now identify particular problems and say things like "the retention rate is a serious problem", or that literacy and numeracy levels are serious problems.

Governments in Australia fund "education systems", and their support of learning is very conditional. Yet ANTA research has shown that Australians have a really positive attitude to "learning", but are less positive about the word "education". While politicians are focused on formal "education" systems, people are saying they like "learning" and there is this enormous gap.

I agree that we won't win any arguments by going to the people and saying "lifelong learning policy is going to turn your life around". However, we can go to government and decision-makers and say "unless we start to integrate more of these areas of learning and life – information brokering, libraries, community settings, the workplace etc – we can't have a responsive strategy that will deal with the problems we have identified." I think it is making those connections that is really important.

Lesley Harrison, Assistant Head, Bachelor for Adult and Vocational Education, University of Tasmania

I'd like to return to discussing what we mean by "lifelong learning".

We all know about formal education, and we all know about non-formal education, the bit that we don't know much about is informal learning.

Society prizes qualifications and society prizes a learning society. But most people participate in informal learning, and while this form of learning is very profitable for workplace, organisation and business, it is under-recognised and under-valued.

The thing is, the majority of the time people don't recognise that they are

learning. They are doing what they are doing, because it is good fun, or because they can meet other people, or because they are getting out there and having a go and giving something back.

I think that the lifelong learning agenda in Australia should not only include formal learning (TAFE, higher education, schools etc), non-formal learning (institutes of adult education etc), but also give emphasis to informal learning (special-interest clubs, learning circles, book discussion groups etc.) and to the people who facilitate informal learning (be they informal teachers or peers).

There are communities out there, especially in rural and regional Australia, and most likely the urban areas as well, who regularly participate in an informal interaction through which skills, knowledge and information are exchanged for the well being of the person and for the well being of the community. Here human capital, intellectual capital and social capital meld. This type of learning must be better recognised.

Bob Campbell, Executive Officer, ACE Council

Addressing the original proposition that we lack focus and that the term lifelong learning also lacks meaning... I think this premise is true because the term 'lifelong learning' focuses on the means rather than the end.

As a sector I think we focus far too much on our internal language. Our business is learning so we will obviously promote learning as a 'good'. But for our clients, for the people who learning with us, learning is often a gateway to various social goals, such as prosperity and social justices.

I think when we say 'lifelong learning', we fail to complete the phrase: lifelong learning...for what? Politicians everywhere, will ask that question, "for what?".

I think it is up to us to clearly define how learning is a gateway to various learning goals.

Geraldine Doogue

As a way moving this discussion forwards, to focus on how the sector might progress, I want to now to look at the relationship between business and the third sector. Tony, do you have strategies for reaching out to industry in a way that would be a useful collaboration?

Tony Brown

Do we have strategies? Yes. Are they very good, well no, I don't think they are. It is something we have to learn.

In my work, I move between practitioners, government, educators and policy makers. None of them really get along with each other. Business and government seem wary of the community sector because they think it is all very 1970s. The community thinks that the government is too bureaucratic, too rigid. Business... well we don't even know about them, they seem foreign to the community sector.

I think there is a desire to make better connections, but it is not working. There are traditional reasons why we don't have a lot to do with each other, but another part of the reason stems from the fact that, during the 1980s, we lived in a world in which competition was key, and the community sector is uncomfortable with this philosophy.

I think there are small examples existing in Australia now which are showing what can happen. The Learning Employment Networks in Victoria are a good example as are Learning Cities. The Smith Family's 'Learning for Life' program is another good example.

I think what is really needed is for government to come in and give a lead and support. I think it is a matter of changing the discourse, changing the way in which that facilitation is

done, and authorising it. At the moment, the context in which we are working is not an environment in which governments authorise and support the work of the community sector.

Elizabeth Pringle, Aged and Community Services Association, NSW and ACT.

One of the things that strikes me has been that there has not been enough inter-linking between the needs of business organisations and the adult learning sector. We have seen a rise of Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses that can be soulless and devoid of opportunities for personal learning.

It seems that business is after a hard core set of skills that people can demonstrate, and that community education is focused on developing a person and the twain shall never meet. There really needs to be a realisation from business that it is the growth of the person, as well as the acquisition of skills, that is actually going to bring about long term change.

We can't just keep churning people out with competency standards without also looking after the growth of the whole person.

Liz Keyes, Senior Project Officer, ANTA*

There has been a lot of misunderstanding around the training packages; that they are just competencies. Competencies are only a framework – they are the skills that are recognised by industry as being necessary.

All the on the job learning that happens provides the context – the flesh around the bones if you like. It is what happens on the ground and with the people that provides the other aspect to the program. I really disagree that the deep learning, the personal learning and development can't happen within VET.

In terms of linking learning and industry, with the creation of the training packages and the national vocational education systems we had, from the very beginning, industry involvement. We have an industry led board and it was industry training advisory bodies that created the training packages. So we recognise the value of industry involvement. I think it is a great model and a strength for Australia.

*(*This is an informal comment made in the context of this discussion. It is Liz Keyes' personal opinion and should not be considered an official statement by ANTA.)*

Moira Scollay, CEO ANTA

I suppose a gross generalisation would be that big businesses like formal systems, small businesses like informal systems – short sharp just-in-time, little bits of courses.

One of the policy challenges for us now is to find ways of taking what small business love – short courses or really informal on-the-job learning, mentoring and so forth – and making sure that when people reach a stage in their lives when they want mobility, they can cash this learning in for a qualification. Our challenge is to get big business to recognise the value of non-formal and informal learning and thereby making all these forms of learning truly mobile.

Patricia Carroll, St George and Sutherland Community College

It was very popular in the 1970s to retain employees by introducing childcare centres. Then we moved to the "family friendly workplace". The next big thing, I think, is the company that can encourage and support its employees in pursuing lifelong learning for the sake of it. For example in Germany, in some companies, people are encouraged to undertake any sort of lifelong learning – even purely recreational learning – because they have the awareness that to have employees who are open to

learning, is a great asset to any company.

I believe that everything depends on marketing. I think we need to ask the heads of business who have piloted these schemes to talk to the corporate sector about what the outcomes were. We need to get champions from industry and the corporate sector who have participated, to talk about how it has benefited them and their work life.

Bill Lucas

Going back to the question of how can make all this happen...

Lets us not forget that we are talking about vote winners here. We know from studies in the UK that 77% employees would prefer to work for an employer who values their training and learning. And everyone wants better schools. So these issues are vote winners.

You need a few politicians who are capable of thinking big. You've got to have a few politicians who are prepared to live with uncertainties – you've got to live with uncertainly because that is what leadership is all about. You've got to have some big people with big ideas.

You've also got to have all key stakeholders – all levels of government, business, voluntary sector and education providers – involved. They have got to be brought together in the same room and you have to find some common ground. This is not a nice thing to have, it is essential.

Participants in the Adult Learners Week 2001 Seminar take time out to consider how to create an Australian learning society (photo: John Cross)

When we did this in the UK, the kinds of things that came out the discussion were simple, but necessary, innovations. Things like, a national, free, helpline number – a service called 'Learndirect' which tells anyone from whatever income bracket, where they can go and get learning near them.

Another simple idea that came from this coming together of stakeholders was the idea of a low-cost online university aimed at small business where people can get just-in-time learning in a style and in a place appropriate to their lifestyle. Finally, there was a request for new programs for unemployed young people that work.

Geraldine Doogue

I appreciate all your thoughts and I hope something constructive can emerge from this. I would love to think that we could end up with something like a Minister for Adult Skills. I wish you luck and I believe that you are on to something. I shall watch with interest... I shall report on you with interest too!

PART II

THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Shortlist entries from the Adult Learners Week 2001 Collins Booksellers Writing Competition

MY LIFE AS A LOSER

A story by Kirstie D'Souza

I like to think my husband was drunk when he called me a deadbeat loser. I like to think that sober he wouldn't have been so vehement. He'd certainly been drinking – a celebration with his mates, supposedly to mark the birth of our son Sean who was then one week old and who slept peacefully through his father leaving. As a dead-beat loser, my husband explained, I was not a fit wife for a man with his education, background and potential, a man who was being fast-tracked by the bank. He had plans to be rich and successful. How could a loser like me be part of those plans? In my weakened postnatal state, I was inclined to agree with him and almost offered to pack his bag. It had always seemed too good to be true that someone like me, who left school at sixteen then failed to complete an apprenticeship in hairdressing, had ended up with someone like him. I felt like a loser – abandoned in a strange city, with no husband, no friends, and a tiny baby.

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Six months later, his family sent me an invitation to a cousin's wedding. I knew they'd only asked me out of a desire to see Sean and because they felt guilty about what had happened. It would be the first time I'd seen my husband since the 'loser' night. I had no money of course and nothing to wear so I enrolled in Everyday Fashion – a course for people just starting out. Thursdays 7–9 pm. Bring own materials. Teacher: Carla Watson. I entertained a fantasy of making a garment so perfect that my husband would fall at my feet. The class was a revelation – not because I made anything remotely wearable, but because it was the only evening of the week I didn't spend in tears. Daytime was bearable but in the wake of my husband's departure, my normal evening routine was: eat dinner, cry for ten minutes, bath baby, sob into towel, put baby to bed, sit in front of telly and cry for two hours. At class, I grappled with fabrics and cross-grains, chatted about bobbins and spools and hardly thought about my loser status or about my husband.

Perhaps it was my familiarity with tears which made me notice Carla's. Other people in the class thought she had hay-fever because she sniffed so often and wiped her eyes. But I knew the signs. At the end of week three, when everyone else had headed home, I asked Carla if she was okay and she began to sob in earnest into her Singer. She told me that after twenty years of marriage, her husband, a bespoke tailor, had run away to America with a fabric salesman. Now the sight of a bolt of cloth was more than she could take. So Carla's tears and my lack of them cemented a great friendship.

My wedding outfit was a disaster but Carla made me a suit of peacock blue and a matching sun-hat for Sean for the occasion. My husband wasn't at the wedding. His mother explained that he'd left Australia to work in London some weeks earlier. I was less heartbroken than I expected.

I started Cake Decoration – produce fabulous creations for every occasion (Mondays 6.30–8.30pm) because I wanted to make Sean's second birthday extra special. I felt he'd had a bad start with a runaway father and a loser of a mother who cried all the time. Carla babysat on Mondays, mending every torn garment in the house after Sean had gone to sleep. After class, we'd drink tea and devour my attempts at piping or moulding or chocolate leaves, always keeping one perfect morsel for Sean to eat next day. The birthday cake was a fabulous thing - shaped like a teddy bear and coated with chocolate ganache. Sean and his friends preferred the doughnuts Carla had bought at the mall, but the parents loved it.

So, as Sean progressed through playgroup and pre-school, I carried on with Cake Decoration II (pre-requisite: Cake Decoration for Beginners) and Cake Decoration – Advanced. Gradually I began to get orders for birthdays, weddings, parties and farewells and for the first time began to doubt my loser status.

Once Sean had started school, I expanded my repertoire with Introduction to Pastry (Monday 9–11am. $50 for materials) and The Art of Confectionery (Tuesdays 12–2pm. For the experienced cook) before succumbing to the demands of Commercial Cookery (Certificate III) at TAFE. My business grew and I employed a group of women I'd met through classes. Sean called them the Cake Ladies.

Sean was eight when I decided it was time to run things more efficiently. I took Computers: Getting Started (Wednesdays 7–9pm). Our class shared a small kitchen area with English for Speakers of Other Languages. The two classes would mingle in the break with the ESOL tutor loudly encouraging her students to grab the opportunity to talk to native English speakers. I noticed Luis at once. Although fifteen years older than me, his quiet dignity and

handsome face still turns heads. But I was drawn to him, not by his soulful eyes and silvered black hair, but by his terrible sadness.

Sean and Carla were playing cards when I got home. I told them I thought I was in love but Sean laughed and said I was too old.

It wasn't until week four that I even noticed Luis's limp, and week seven before I began to understand his sadness.

His mother was Portuguese, his father Spanish and they had died in a train crash when Luis was ten. He'd been raised by two rival aunts, one in Spain and one in Portugal. When he was old enough, he escaped to Brazil where he herded cattle and eventually became a teacher. In his thirties he married a troubled young woman who in the throes of terrible depression killed herself and their unborn baby. Luis took off, running from his grief for years, ending up in Africa where he worked as a volunteer with an aid agency until the lower part of his right leg was blown off by a landmine. He came to Australia to look after one of the rival aunts who was old and very sick.

I asked him once what had kept him going through his tragedies. He said that it was the belief that one day there would be this – and he took my hand. I was the light at the end of the tunnel, he said, the sunshine after years of rain.

The following year I took Yoga For Pregnancy (Thursdays 10.30–12.00. Bring a towel) and Active Birth: Breathing and Relaxation Techniques (Monday 6.30–8.30pm) but none of that helped when our daughter was born, ten weeks premature. Everything that could go wrong, did go wrong and she and I were both sick – she in her body and I in my heart – for weeks afterwards.

Carla and the cake ladies clustered around Luis and Sean, providing food and clean clothes and Jackie and Sue from Yoga took turns taking Sean to soccer training and helping him with homework while I was at the hospital. But it was from each other that Sean and Luis drew their greatest comfort. Luis would not come near our daughter and I feared history was repeating itself and I'd be the loser once more. It was Sean who pointed out that Luis was probably afraid to love her in case, like everything else he'd loved in his life, she was taken from him.

She wasn't taken and Luis named her Graça because she's a gift from god. He loves her passionately but still distantly inching a little closer to her as time passes.

It was Carla who came up with the idea for the cafe. Luis's aunt had left him some money and the cake ladies and I were ready for new challenges. It's a warm welcoming place. Carla made all the soft furnishings. Luis does front of house and is adored by the older women who fill the place each morning at coffee time. People are always asking why it's called The Loser's Cafe.

I rang my husband a few weeks ago after a friend from Discovering The Internet (Wed 7–9 pm) helped to track him down. I thought it was time to talk about divorce. I asked him if he was rich and successful, as he'd planned. He said he was getting there. He and his partner, a banker like him, have no children yet because they're busy with careers but they have a large house in a London suburb he described as stylish, they drive new cars and travel extensively. When he asked what I'd done with the years, I said that I'd gone to classes and that my life was richer than I'd ever hoped.

David Stratton
Film critic, lecturer and co-presenter, 'The Movie Show', SBS Television.

"Teaching film history at the Centre for Continuing Education (in Sydney and in Canberra) is the most rewarding thing I do. As someone who came late to teaching adult classes, I find Adult Education the most stimulating experience of my life.

"Lifelong learning is important as the excitement of new discoveries provides constant stimulation. I believe that to become a clever country, Australia needs to have a government that doesn't tax books and that realises the overwhelming importance of education."

AND ANDREW SAID

A story by Bill Clohesy

An assorted mixture of all sorts. A bit like the packet of party mix lollies you buy at the $2 shop. Some soft and others a bit hardened with age. Some sweet and some a bit bitter from past experiences. Some juicy and others a bit dry from being left too long in someone's pocket. Some brightly coloured in dress and others a bit drab.

But all at the party.

Well it wasn't really a party and the packet didn't contain lollies. But this was what crossed my mind as an assortment of people filed into a training room recently to undertake a four week 'Getting back to work' programme.

The youngest was 23, the eldest 47 and I was scared.

This was my first training session as a leader with adult learners. I had dealt with young adult many times before, but this was different.

They didn't really want to be there!

Their incentive to turn up had been 'Do a course or lose your entitlements'.

'Great' said I to myself, 'Where to now?'

Being nervous and little lost as to where to begin, I got down on my hands and knees.

Right there in front of them!

Prayer wasn't on my mind as I surveyed the legs of all of them under the tables.

I then stood, went to the door and checked that it wasn't locked.

Nope not locked.

'Who doesn't want to be here?', came out of my mouth.

Unfortunately all nine people put their hands up.

'Well I have just checked under the table', I said, 'and none of you are chained. And I have checked that the door is unlocked. If you don't want to be here, you are free to leave.'

'Do you mean we can go home?', several replied. 'Yes', said I.

But they didn't.

'Who hated school?' *'We all did Sir'*.

'Well this ain't school and my name is Bill'.

We got to know each other. Adenka the immigrant from Hungry with a Law Degree not valid here; Danny with three little ones and on his own; Sharla who couldn't read or write; Sandra with teenage children on drugs; on it went.

Why people open up like this I know not. But they did.

As morning tea arrived I noticed that my confidence had risen but as they went to lunch – long 'playtime' – it fell. Would they come back?

They did.

Day one drew us together. Some laughed. Some cried.

And they all came back next day.

So did Andrew, the new boy. He was just like the late comer to a party when everyone has had a few drinks and you have had none. Everyone knows each other and is having fun.

You are the outsider.

Stay or leave, leave or stay?

Andrew stayed and Andrew cried most of day two.

He was 49 and had been employed by a Government department since the age of 16. Six months earlier had been retrenched through whatever reorganisation had occurred and had been out of work since.

And as in all Government jobs of his day, he had sworn to uphold the secrecy laws of the Commonwealth.

So what?

'So what' was, he would never disclose his skills. Andrew believed that everything he had learned in his working life was secret. He thought that everything he had done for thirty plus years was irrelevant to the private sector and the skills he had developed could not be transferred.

The group tried. I tried. But Andrew would not move away from the idea that he was now unemployable.

At the end of the second day Andrew said he wasn't coming back.

But he did.

Day after day after day.

To What, I said to Andrew here

To what are you doin' in class

I'm learning something bright he said

And it's time to get up off me arse.

In the third week of the programme, Andrew said that he would not be there next day, as he had to go to court. We never saw him for three days.

He did return, and over coffee I asked him what happened.

'I did as we talked in training. I dressed well, I looked the Magistrate in the eye, and I told it like it was. No lies, no pretence. I was confident.'

Confidence!

'Is that what this was all about?', I thought.

Confident in knowing that, whatever the $2 packet of party mix looks like, you know they will be fresh when you open it up.

Adenka is refreshing her Law Degree at University. Danny became an apprentice mechanic. The others I don't know about.

Except for Andrew.

He called to say he got a job as a storeman.

And then Andrew said, 'Thanks'.

Adult Learners Week 2001 Open Day, Hanson Training Services, Alice Springs, Northern Territory.

WOMEN'S WORK

A story by Megan Chappell

They had moved from the city several years before. A 'quaint' little cottage, 'a handyman's dream', real-estate-speak for 'needs lots of work'. David bounced around like a kid with a new toy at the thought. Maureen argued, unsuccessfully, that the work required was beyond his limited skills. Now it seemed she was right. Not so much a prediction, more a realistic view from her many experiences of his handiwork. "It's crooked" she mouthed to him, tapping the window with a sudsy finger. She had been watching him struggle with the fence while she washed the breakfast dishes and could control herself no longer. David looked confused. "Not straight!" she yelled through the glass. Misunderstanding, he smiled. Frustrated, she gave up and finished the dishes.

Maureen was a confident woman. Her small frame and determined manner seemed a contradiction. One could count on Maureen to 'tell it like it is' except where David was concerned. It was not that she couldn't see his shortcomings, more that she chose not to give her opinion, to him anyway. Joyce, who lived next door, didn't have the same reserve. A round little woman with a boisterous laugh, she could often be heard scolding 'her Bert'. The two sat sipping tea and enjoying hot pumpkin scones.

"You'll never guess what my Bert did last night" and without a pause "blew the oven door right off its hinges."

Maureen was not expected to participate in the conversation other than the obligatory nod or exclamation but this bit of news required questioning. "What on earth was he doing Joyce? How do you blow an oven door off?"

"Silly man, I arxed him to put the tinned peas in the oven to warm but 'e didn't put holes in the tin, did 'e?" Joyce blustered "Common sense if you arx me but my Bert don't have none of that!"

"If Dave had done that, I'd be three weeks without an oven. He insists on fixing everything himself and it takes him a fortnight to read up on how to do it" sighed Maureen. "Bert may not be the culinary expert, but at least he's good around the house" she added.

"True enough darl, 'e's good at men's work, my Bert." said Joyce as she stuffed the last of a scone into her mouth.

This dated ethos had irritated Maureen when they had first moved from the city. There was precise division between the duties of the sexes. At times, she felt she was living her mother's life – man goes to work, woman at home preparing for his return. Men's work – woman's work, she had wanted more. Retirement had conjured ideas of companionship and shared experiences for Maureen but when David retired, he took up the mantle of Mr Fix-it leaving her to entertain herself. Gathering her sewing box and materials Maureen readied herself for the Wednesday quilting class while Joyce rinsed the tea things.

She had tried to get David to take a course with her, something they could both enjoy. "Photograph, Internet for Beginners or Pottery" she had suggested. David had given her a bemused look.

"When am I going to have time for that Mause? Too much to do around here." He exclaimed.

Maureen hated the casual way he had taken to shortening her name. Protestations were met with a slap on the behind and "Loosen up love!" She enjoyed the sense of community in the small country town and they both supported the many fundraising ventures. Secretly, though, she wished she could spend more time alone with David pursuing mutual interests. Maureen arrive home in the

late afternoon to find the two labradors from down the back had push through the new fence and her clean washing was strewn across the yard. Rewashing was not as irksome as the knowledge that it would probably be months before David worked out how to dog-proof his creation.

Next morning, as Maureen hung the washing and David surveyed the damaged fence, Bert appeared. His balding head sporting little red spots.

"What on earth happened to you, mate?" blurted David.

"Little accident in the kitchen, Dave" said Bert, in a tone that precluded further enquiries. The two stood staring at the fence as if their combined interest would will it to straighten. After a long silence Bert announced "Gotta go, oven door to fix. Little woman will nag 'til I do".

Pegging out the last towel, Maureen told David she was off to class and left him to sort out his latest fiasco. Dinner that night was a simple affair, jaffles and tinned soup. Maureen was tired after her long day at class. David spent the evening with his digest of home repairs trying to work out how the dogs had managed to bring the fence down a second time. Maureen went to bed early, neither of them in the mood for conversation. Sleep was unrefreshing that night for David who was fretting about being outfoxed by a couple of canines. Maureen on the other hand slept more soundly than she had for ages and was up just after the sun. Finally waking to a quiet house, David wondered why he couldn't hear Maureen moving about. Wandering into the kitchen in slippered feet he expected to find her with a cup of tea and the morning papers. The kitchen was empty and she was nowhere to be seen.

'Clunk! Clunk!' came the noise from the backyard, 'Clunk! Clunk!' Through the kitchen window he saw his wife, 'Clunk! Clunk!' Tripping over himself he raced into the yard, one sock on the other dangling from his fingers, shoes forgotten in haste. "What are you doing?" he managed to splutter.

"Well Dave" she said lovingly as she lowered the star picket driver "thought I'd give you a hand with the fence'.

"And what would you know about fencing?" he said with amusement.

"Enough to know how to stop those two" she said, gesturing towards the four legged audience gathered on the neighbours' lawn. "I went to Bob Wilson's workshop yesterday – on Fencing for Beginners" David was lost for words and so said nothing as he eyed the firmly entrenched and very straight star pickets. "I'm about ready for a break. Why don't you pop inside and put the kettle on". Not so much a question as a command, but glad to have an excuse and time to think this through, he did just that.

Maureen entered the kitchen to find David engrossed in the Adult Education brochure she had left on the table as a not-so-gentle hint. The unattended kettle whistled furiously. Pleased, Maureen said nothing and started preparing the tea. Sitting down she finally spoke. "Bob runs other interesting courses: welding and small motor maintenance. I was thinking we could find out why the lawnmower is so temperamental". She said with the emphasis on 'we'.

"Mmm" mumbled David putting the brochure aside "Actually, I thought I might sign up for that course in 'Country Cooking' as you are going to be pretty busy around here!" he said with emphasis on the 'you' – together they laughed.

REJUVENATION

A story by Megan Rowe

"I can't even operate the video recorder your dad got me, how am I supposed to use *that*?" Aunty Marj laughed, taking a sip of tea, and returning to the pages of her latest library book.

"Don't worry, Dad used to be really hopeless on the computer too!" her playful ten year old nephew turned from the desk to grin. "He' s not too bad now."

"Now hurry on! Just because you and that thing are here for the week, doesn't mean you get to stay up late!"

"But I need you to help me with my homework, I told you!" Josh implored with his biggest smile. "Dad says you're a really quick typist!"

"Ah, the delights of Paris in the 19th century must wait for my return," Aunty Marj rolled her eyes and put down her book.

"Here, you have the big chair," offered Josh, as he moved to make way. "I'll click the mouse where I want it to go."

"Click the mouse? When I was your age you could catch a mouse, or scare a mouse, but clicking a mouse?" joked Aunty Marj.

"Very funny, ha ha ha. *You* know about computers," Josh glanced warily at his aunt.

"Well, yes, I know about them, hear about them all the time, see them on the telly, but I – I've never actually used one," she confessed.

Josh knew she wasn't joking. "For real?"

"Not that I'm interested, really," Aunty Marj declared. "I've gotten by all my life without them, why should I start now?"

"But Aunty Marj, there's so much you could do! You could send email..."

"The Post Office is still in operation, I believe," his aunt retorted.

"...or do artwork..."

"I have brushes and paint aplenty, " she was unmoved.

"Play games?"

Aunty Marj tilted her head to the trunk in the corner, which Josh knew from experience contained every board game known to mankind.

"You could write," he suggested timidly.

She held up a pen and paper off the desk with a glare.

"But you can find out so much about anything you like, anything you're

interested in! And new stuff!" Josh was exasperated. "It's such a fun way to learn heaps!"

For a moment it seemed his aunt's interest had been sparked. Yet if it had, she thought better of it.

"I'm old enough to 'know heaps' myself," she imitated him. "Now come on, what do you need me to help you with? I want to get back to the final chapter of my book."

"Ok, ok, this is the search engine," he clicked on a picture and a blank box appeared on the screen. "Now I need you to type in keywords. My assignment is about, um..." Josh rustled among his schoolbooks on the floor. "...elephants and where they come from and what they eat and do they sleep and all that sort of thing. Just type in 'information on elephants' to start with."

"And I suppose this will tell you absolutely everything you need to know," Aunty Marj was sceptical as her fingers flew over the keys.

"Well, pretty much! " grinned Josh, "Now press the 'Enter' button."

"What does that-" Aunty Marj was cut off before she could ask for an explanation.

"There you go, " Josh was victorious, "That's a list of all the websites that have information for me about elephants!

There was a brief silence.

"Oh! Well! Just like that? I mean, that's it?" Aunty Marj seemed genuinely surprised. "I had no idea!"

"Type in 'pictures of elephants' and see what we get," Josh was enthusiastic as he directed his somewhat overwhelmed aunt.

"And because I have to go to bed, I just click here," Josh demonstrated with the mouse, "and the computer will remember all this when I want to look at it again tomorrow!"

"Bed, yes, absolutely right," his aunt seemed distracted as she hustled him off to the spare room, and kissed him goodnight.

She headed for her cosy armchair and her final chapter amid the flickering, unfamiliar light of the computer screen, accidentally catching her foot on Josh's pile of schoolbooks.

"Oh no! " she cried, as the book and her cup of tea were swept together to the floor. The paperback was drenched, unreadable for the time being.

After catching her breath and rescuing the carpet with a towel, Aunty Marj glanced boredly around the room. So much for finishing her library book.

The computer screen caught her eye. She chuckled to herself, then reached for the TV guide instead. Hold on, she thought, why not?! The TV guide went back on the table, as she slowly approached the new gadget instead.

It was just a box of metal, really, she thought. A bit of glass for the screen, and heavens knows how many wires and fiddly things inside it. Funny how it's captured everyone's imagination, she pondered. Well, maybe there is something to it after all.

"Bit bright," she mumbled as she sat herself down in the "big chair", staring at the screen, and adjusting her glasses .

Cautiously, she took hold of the computer mouse, and moved it around the way she had seen Josh do. She pressed her finger down, and heard a quiet click. "Oh!" she was pleased with herself, "I clicked the mouse!"

The empty box appeared before her. She frowned, what now? What would her keywords be? Josh's words echoed in her ear, "...anything you like...," she thought, "Anything?" Aunty Marj's face lit up with a broad smile as her speedy fingers played with the keyboard.

"Paris in the 19th century" she typed. Enter .

Choices, such choices! History of, Literature of, Food, Travel, Architecture, Art, all her favourites – so much to revisit and enjoy, so many fresh new stories and pictures. And people, people just like her, creating their own pages about their own interests, welcoming you to write to them, all there at your fingertips. It may have been a long time since Aunty Marj had been to school, but a love of learning and the joy of discovery had never been lost on her.

Dizzy with her new unexpected passion, it was way past her own bedtime when Aunty Marj pulled back from the screen, a tad cross-eyed, mind overflowing with new places and stories, lists in her head of things to follow up, new books to read, people to contact, discoveries to be made.

Josh and Aunty Marj shared a quiet breakfast. So quiet in fact that Josh noticed his aunt didn't even bother correcting him when he read comics at the table.

"So how did your dad change from Really Hopeless to Not Too Bad? On the computer, that is." Aunty Marj asked nonchalantly over her cuppa.

Josh shrugged. "Dad did lessons at my school on the weekends, grownup lessons."

"Oh, for adults just like your father?" Aunty Marj asked, a tinge of disappointment in her voice.

"Nah, they had really old people like you there too!" Josh said cheerily. "They've even got this club going, where they get together and send emails, I dunno, to other really old people around the world, don't ask me!" Josh chomped on his toast. Until it registered. "Oh, no way, do *you* want to?"

"No, why on earth should I?" Aunty Marj couldn't restrain her yawn any longer.

"Ooh, you do seem a bit tired this morning, Aunty Marj!" Josh teased. "You spent ages on the computer, didn't you?!"

Aunty Marj waved off a grinning Josh at the school gate. As soon as he had disappeared into the colourful crowd of sports uniforms and backpacks, she made a detour to the Office.

"My nephew mentioned you run adult computer courses," she confidently asked the receptionist.

"Certainly!," the girl reached for the brochure stand. "Just fill out the enrolment form, and if you could also fill out our survey, just to let us know where you heard about us, and why you want to enrol in the course..."

Aunty Marj grinned, refreshed. "My nephew said it's a fun way to learn heaps!"

AN AUTUMN FLOWER

A story by Elizabeth Cooke

The voice on the phone was hesitant, apologetic. Could she speak to someone about the Assistant in Nursing Course? She didn't want to be a 'trouble'.

'Trouble' arrived three weeks later on the first evening of the new course. She was a female of indeterminate age with faded sandy hair and a putty complexion. A crumpled $20 note was clutched in her right hand and she looked strangely like a middle-aged kindergarten student on her first day. From a plastic supermarket bag she pulled an exercise book and sat down in the front row next to the door. The $20 was tucked carefully into her cuff

and she looked around the room in wonderment.

This was like no other classroom she had ever been in. Where was the blackboard? Come to think of it, the familiar smell of chalk was missing too. That shiny white board looked impressive and the strange glass box with the light angled above it was a complete mystery. The walls were hung with graphic charts of body parts and a friendly skeleton, complete with broken fibula, lurched drunkenly in the corner.

The tutor's experienced gaze roamed over this latest new group of hopefuls. She could usually sum them up pretty well on first encounter. There were the usual clutch of giggling 'just out of school' girls sitting together up the back and bound to be trouble. Eager looking women ? the returning to work brigade ? filled most of the seats and the balance appeared to be the scatter of males looking for a career change or retraining after yet another retrenchment.

But the woman in the front row seemed set apart from these groups. She seemed an outsider, both in looks and demeanour, as if she belonged to another generation altogether.

The usual introductory preliminaries took place and the tutor rolled comfortably from one point to the next as she moved through the well-practiced induction of this motley group. In a few short months they would be her latest graduates.

'Now, I'd like each of you to introduce yourselves to the group and give us some background information about your life and why you're here.'

One by one, these soon-to-be Assistants in Nursing got to their feet and told their story to the group. Kevin was a welder and had four children. His wife had a job and would be the breadwinner while he was training. He hoped to work at night and help more with the kids during the day. When would he sleep?

Agnes was from Greece and her youngest child was now at school. After leaving school at fifteen, her only work had been in the family milk bar and she couldn't wait to start learning.

With varying degrees of confidence, they shared their backgrounds. Finally, only one remained, and the tutor, smiling encouragingly, beckoned her forward. She sat, mute and motionless in her seat, eyes downcast. The class waited as the seconds ticked uncomfortably by.

Just at the point where discomfort became acute embarrassment, she shifted in her seat, rose and faced the class. In a soft but clearly audible voice, she addressed the class.

Five minutes later, she sat down in a silent room; the only sound to be heard was the definite click of the minute hand as it counted out the day.

Her name was Audrey. She was fifty-three years old. Having left school at fifteen she had spent the last thirty-seven years caring for her mother. She had never been in the workforce or married. Her bed-ridden mother, who had suffered from Alzheimer's disease for the last ten years of her life, had died only three months ago. Now free of responsibilities, Audrey was determined to train as an Assistant in Nursing and gain employment.

'I want to learn how to care for people properly,' she had told the group. 'Mum never complained but I know I should have looked after her better.'

During the ensuing months Audrey was adopted by the other class members and she blossomed under their interest and care. The noisy girls took her in hand and she soon sported a new hairstyle and more fashionable clothes. The men in the group made sure she was included in the after class trips to the pub and in a few short weeks Audrey was comfortably seated at the bar chatting happily to her class mates. The return to work

group helped with organising some simple house renovations and redecorating.

The pressure of work, however took its toll on this diverse group of people. Assignments followed one another thick and fast and many of the students were tempted to give it all away and revert to their previous life. It was Audrey who kept their spirits up and persuaded them to persevere. Her house became an unofficial study venue and assignments were completed round the large plain dining room table that had been deserted for so many years. This sad house became alive with the sound of laughter and discussion as questions and problems were debated enthusiastically.

The course moved to its conclusion and the students were placed in work experience positions in various establishments round town. Soon they would go their separate ways and the link that had bound them together for the past few months would be severed. Audrey's house would once again become the silent, empty shell it used to be.

It is easy to imagine how daunted Audrey was as she arrived at the Nursing Home on Day 1 of the Work Experience block. The Director of Nursing was a brisk young woman with a welcoming smile but

Adult art students make sketches of the National Launch of Adult Learners Week 2001, National Museum of Australia, Canberra. (photo: Eddie Misic)

nevertheless at fifty-three, Audrey's very junior status seemed at odds with her appearance. Was this all a waste of time? How could she knuckle down and answer to this woman young enough to be her daughter?

The orientation day seemed endless for Audrey. With so many things to remember, she longed for the clock to crawl round to going home time and the solitude of her empty house. The bundles of humanity hunched in chairs or curled in their beds were someone's mother or father, she tried to remind herself. As she moved through the wards with the DON, their faded eyes followed this new person in their midst. An alert old man with a wasted body smiled at her as they passed by.

'And what's your name girlie?' he asked.

'I'm Audrey, this is my first day here.'

'You look just like my Maisie,' he mumbled into his blanket.

'She's been dead for years,' said the DON crisply as they moved on to the next ward. 'He still misses her.'

Afternoon tea rounds completed Audrey's busy first day. Her feet throbbed, her head was bursting with so much new information, her back ached with the unaccustomed bending and still there were six more people to attend to. How did they do this day after day with people that would not get better no matter how good the care given? The thought of a quiet, empty house seemed even more attractive.

She crossed the corridor that led to the DON's office ready to check in after her first day for a debrief. The alert old man was moving down the corridor inch by painful inch in his walking frame. His eyes gleamed as he saw her.

'Hey girlie, Maisie, are you coming back to see me tomorrow? he asked.

Audrey looked at him as she paused outside the office.

'Of course I will,' she replied, touching him gently on the shoulder. 'Yes, I'll be back tomorrow.

ADULT LEARNING, MY EXPERIENCE

A story by Joan Darnell

Introduction

I arrived in Australia from England and was having difficulty coping. I was at lifeline, seeking help, when I discovered Solutions. This is an organisation that offers Literacy classes for adults.

My schooling was very disrupted and I was not comfortable with reading and writing. I had problems filling in forms and writing letters. I saw the literacy classes as an opportunity to fulfil my needs.

After considering it of a couple of days, I decided to contact them. I was assessed with what I was able to do, and also worked out what I wanted to achieve, with the help of Alison and her team of tutors.

Maroochydore Library

After talking to Alison, I chose to work one on one with a tutor. Lesley became my tutor after we met at Nambour. Our first meeting at Maroochydore Library was a little daunting as both of us were shy and nervous. We told each other how we felt with our situation, and were able to relax and settle down to do what we were there for. My first lessons with Lesley were as basic as practising writing letters of the alphabet in an exercise book. From there, we advanced to writing letters and cards for my friends. This went very well, and continued to do so for the next year.

My Motivation

I have always wanted to be better educated. My family consists of a husband and two children. Now that the children are grown up and off my hands, I felt I had time to pursue the goal of further education.

My husband has had difficulty coming to terms with me wanting to further my education. He is too proud to join classes and seek help. It will take time for him to accept my new ability.

Classroom Situation

Lesley, my tutor, and her family, are returning to South Australia to live. Because of this, Lesley suggested trying the classroom environment for a couple of weeks. I have been attending the literacy classes for four weeks now, and have not looked back. We have been writing summaries and doing comprehension, expanding my vocabulary and skills with the dictionary.

'Learn With Laughter' – Shortlisted entry in the ALW 2001 Ricoh Australia Photo Competition
(photo: Mia Barone, Vic)

Internet lessons during Adult Learners Week 2001 at the Capricorn Coast Learning Centre, Yeppoon, Queensland.

Fun in the classroom

As the classes are small groups we are able to have one to one tutoring. The people are friendly with no pressure. We can learn at our own pace and I feel comfortable with the way I am progressing. Situations arise where by the whole group are falling over themselves with laughter.

Skills in computers

We have now branched out into computer classes. The local library has computer and Internet classes where you can book one-hour sessions. My tutor, Lesley, took me for the first lesson on looking for books. In doing so, she asked me if I was interested in learning how to use a computer. I jumped at the chance and my answer was yes.

At first this was very confusing and strained my eyes. With patience and practice, I have accomplished a good standard.

We have even 'Surfed the Net' and used Hotmail. I have been able to communicate with relatives overseas which has been tremendous for all concerned. I was even able to take another student and introduce her to the Internet. She was delighted with her progress and it turned me into a tutor for a short time. The above has lifted my self-esteem and widened my horizons.

About a month ago, our son Russell bought us a computer. Not only have my skills improved, this has changed my husband's attitude. He has taught himself some skills and has become interested enough to enrol in computer classes at the library. He is now more supportive of my desire to learn.

My success at this point in time

I feel I have accomplished a great deal with Lesley's help, and I am sure she realises the gratitude that I have for her. Lesley introduced me to a computer. At first I was terrified, but with her patience and her ability to understand my feelings, I became quite confident. It is a whole new world for me. Magic!

Where to from here?

Over the past year I have met and made many friends, had lots of laughs and learnt new skills. I plan to continue attending the classes and improving my skills on the computer. My goals include map reading, first aid, improving my math and continuing to have a good time. I intend to further my education as much as possible. My aim is to continue to learn to the best of my ability, so as to be able to understand the use of language proficiently.

Lesley is still on the coast in Queensland awaiting her departure. I have invited her to my home to help me further with my computer skills. At this time I will giver her my small gift and have afternoon tea. Later in the week we will have a class gathering to catch up and to say goodbye.

DESIRE TO RIDE

A story by Greg Bogaerts

Jimmy Hammersmith lived on the outskirts of Newcastle in a house made of fibro and iron. The dwelling was jammed next to a boundary of swamp and barbed wire that separated Jimmy's house from the sheep that once belonged to the abattoir before it closed and left twenty or more Novocastrians jobless.

Whenever I pulled up in my rusty Datsun 120Y, every Friday, to give Jimmy his hour of tuition, the sheep would crowd into the muck of the swamp and rub themselves bloody against the barbed wire. They seemed to have a desire to be owned, to have someone to lay claim to them even if it meant a one-way trip to the chopping block. Their plaintive collective bleating was only drowned out by the raucous welcome I received from Jimmy Hammersmith, ex bikie, ex husband and ex soldier.

"G'day mate! L...ll...ong time, n...no see!" he'd boom falteringly, the hesitant syllables of his speech spluttering like the back firing of an engine over the paddocks of lantana and the few, but still-occupied, Great Depression shacks scattered amongst the gums and scrubby bottle brush.

And the stock pens were still there, close to the back of Jimmy's place. Jimmy and I had read some local histories I'd borrowed from the library; simple straightforward facts about the suburb where Jimmy lived.

Difficult enough to challenge Jimmy's reading skills but interesting enough to hold Jimmy's attention, especially the paragraphs about how families lived in the stock pens during the Great Depression because they didn't have the money to rent a decent house.

"And I lived just near them pens out the back there," Jimmy told me. "I reckon there's not much separatin' me from them poor bastards who lived in th' pens in th' 30s".

He had a limp, Jimmy, from where the army truck backed over him one night when Jimmy came back to barracks, pissed to the eyeballs, and didn't see the two-storey high vehicle coming for him. It left him with half the bones in his body broken, but maybe worse than that, it left him with his brain bruised beyond immediate repair. He had a metal plate in the top of his head and during the cold weather it played merry hell with him.

"Christ it's bloody hard to concentrate on readin' in cold weather with that bloody plate in me head. I reckon I could earn a quid or two as a mobile fridge. A plate of snags and half a pound of butter on top of me head would keep as fresh as a virgin until kingdom come. Be of more use than that brain of mine underneath," he'd tell me buckling over with laughter and dribbling on the book we were trying to read.

After the accident ended Jimmy's army career, he went back to riding motor bikes. He'd been a bikie in his youth, so the lure of freedom a powerful Harley Davidson offered was too much to ignore, even though he'd sworn to himself that his days as a member of a gang were long over.

He'd stop, in the middle of a sentence he was reading to me, and look at a space just above my head, as though he was still out on the road on his bike. But then some unsavoury memory he'd been pushing away would surface.

"I didn't always used t' be like this yer know. All quiet and studious like," he told me once, filling one of those mysterious silences. "I wasn't any good for me own good. When I was a gang member. Just as bad when I was discharged from the army and started ridin' again. Couldn't keep my mouth shut. Always in trouble with the cops. Belted more than a few, belted more than a few people I came across in town if I didn't like the look of 'em. Losing the licence put a stop to that."

Jimmy Hammersmith lost his licence when he'd gone to court on yet another assault charge. He was sent to counselling, anger management, and the shrink soon cottoned onto Jimmy's brain damage and before Jimmy knew it, the RTA had taken away his licence. Told him he could have it back and ride his bike again just as soon as he passed his test. Fifteen times he'd sat for the exam and failed miserably every time.

His memory was shot, and his reading and writing skills were primary school level at best, which is where I came in, trying to teach him to read well enough to pass his exams so he could take flight again on his beloved bike.

"Get me away from here if I could get on that bike again. Yer know me mates from the bike ridin' days still come around. Still get me pissed and I don't know what I'm doin'. Belted one of 'em only the other day. I was pissed but when I say what I'd done t' poor little Mikey I tell yer I just cried. All I wanted t' do was get on one of them Harleys I've restored and take flight away from the sight of Mikey's nose. Plastered like a lump of putty across his face it was."

I'd been given Jimmy as a student by the local TAFE. The woman in charge of the adult literacy section phoned me and asked me to come in for a chat.

"He meeds lots of help. A woman couldn't possibly go out there to his...er...home...er...house to coach him. It would have to be a man," she declared and pushed Jimmy's file at me across the desk as though it contained a colony of fleas resident amongst the few pages.

When I first arrived at Jimmy's I saw what her problem was. Every square inch of the walls, bathroom and toilet included, were covered with pictures of women in various of stages of undress but mostly women completely undressed. It made concentrating on the lesson somewhat difficult. An old black and white photograph of Sophia Loren, wearing only a pair of lacy nickers, was particularly distracting.

Jimmy soon had me figured whenever I drifted off in the middle of a tute.

"It's them short brunettes with th' big tits isn't it?!" he guffawed so loudly the sheep outside clustered around the back of the house and started bleating. "Yer can't fool me, I can see yer've got a shockin' weakness there," he grinned mischievously.

In fact Jimmy went to the trouble of rearranging all of his girlie shots for when I visited every Friday. The blondes and red heads were gone from the wall I faced when trying to teach Jimmy to read and write. In their place was an army a phalanx of short brunettes with big breasts.

With benign glee, Jimmy watched me struggle through the lesson, trying to concentrate on the words, the phrases, and the sentences that kept transforming themselves into short naked women of generous proportions.

An every Friday afternoon, when I got back home, I would drag my wife off to the bedroom.

"Just what sort of books are you reading with that man?" she queried.

The effect of adult literacy tutes with Jimmy Hammersmith on my love life is something I still haven't quite come to terms with. In fact it's something I really don't like to think too much about.

After some months of dogged work and chats over cups of tea, Jimmy opened up even more about his past.

"Yer know th' main reason I want me licence back is so I can go and see Helen. Me missus. We're not divorced but I haven't seen 'er in eighteen months. Lives up north near Grafton with our daughter Melanie. I'm just dyin' to go and see 'em. Try to make amends to 'em for the things I done in the past," he told me.

This spurred me on. We worked harder than ever, and I lobbied the

EVENING CLASSES

A story by Rananda Rich

TAFE for extra hours. In response I was told that Jimmy's allocation of tute hours was coming to an end, that funding had been cut, and that there would be no more hours of tuition for Jimmy.

Jimmy had one more go at passing his test but failed again. The last time I saw Jimmy Hammersmith was when I called around to see how he was going. I arrived just in time to see him swing his leg over one of his Harleys.

"But you haven't got the licence back," I said.

"I don't care mate. Enough is enough. I'm startin' to feel like one of them sheep out the back. No place to belong and I don't want to end up like them people who lived in the stocks. And I can't go on getting' pissed and doin' stupid things when the old bikies come around. But most of all I've got to get to Helen, licence or no licence. Anyway, the tutes have helped. I can read the road signs now so I won't get lost as much as I used to." He said, laughed and rode away.

I flick through the TV channels again. There is an ad break on each one except for ABC that is showing something in black and white. I wonder whether the TV channels deliberately coincide them like that. I had been hoping to catch a few minutes of Home and Away before Big Brother came on again. Sara-Marie is being loud again this episode and another fiery house discussion is about to be shown in the next segment. However, a nasty court case appears to be in progress on Home and Away and I wonder what has been going on.

The evening is stretching ahead of me. The TV pullout from the Telegraph has been well examined. Monday sees me watching Friends and then Ally McBeal, though I don't know why as she grates on my nerves. Tuesday is CSI and Money. Wednesday used to be Boot Camp but I must have been the only regular viewer because halfway through the series they switched it to a later time slot. Thursday is my favourite because Dawson's Creek is great this series and that is followed by ER or X files, whichever looks more interesting, and of course I never miss Big Brother, or its Uncut version. And so it goes day after day, week after week. Too lethargic to even move after work, I try and entertain myself by lying on the sofa watching the flickering screen.

Tonight I feel uneasy and a bit guilty about this. I have a sudden vision of me in five years time in the same place and position, flicking through the channels to find something worthwhile to watch until bedtime.

I pick the booklet off the coffee table where it has lain, unexamined, since I found it at the library last week. It is pretty thick for an information booklet. I've just read through the Monday listings when Big Brother comes on again and down it goes as my attention is riveted because Blair stubbed his toe when getting ready for bed.

Later on in the week I have had time to flick through the adult education class booklet in more detail. There is something good on every evening. I like the look of Creative Writing on a Monday, Permaculture in the City on a Tuesday, Pilates on a Wednesday and Computer Web Page Design on a Thursday. And let's not forget Saturday; sailing courses, canoe trips

and healthy cooking classes all look appealing.

Slowly, slowly I tell myself and decide to take up Pilates again because it did wonders for my back last year. When I call to enrol, the woman on the end of the phone sounds busy and harassed and tells me the class is full, but they've put in an extra one on Thursday at six-fifteen. That's way too early for me. I'd never be able to get away from work on time so I dither as I try to think what to do. She sighs her impatience.

"OK, how about the Creative Writing on Mondays?" I ask.

"There's only one place left," she says abruptly.

"I'll take it," I say, decision made, if rather rapidly. I had no idea that these words would be so popular.

"How would you like to pay?" she replies.

"How about credit card?" I know that I can because the enrolment form says so. "Do you take Diner's Card?"

"No. We don't. Visa and Mastercard only."

The more obstacles there appear to be for this the more taken I am with the idea and out of sheer stubbornness I am now set on following this through.

Students from the Holdfast College for Seniors French Class take a bow after their presentation of 'The Tragic Tale of Pyramus and Thisbe'. Glenelg, South Australia.

"Well how can I pay? I'm at work all day and I really want to do this. Can I pay on the night when I come along?" I know I'm pushing it as I sense her crossness from the silence down the phone line.

"I promise I'll turn up, I'll fax the enrolment form to you right now, just please hold that place for me" I continue.

She finally relents and it's all organised. I reflect while sitting at my paper-strewn desk at work. Mondays should work well for me. Client deadlines rarely occur early in the week. The homework side of it concerns me though. Will I have enough time? Will I be motivated to do it? If I don't, will I stop going to classes?

A hundred and ten bucks to enrol; in my head I run through the things I could get for that:

- A blouse and a pair of shoes.
- A week's worth of groceries.
- Five decent bottles of wine.
- A pine bookshelf
- A rental car for two days.

Still, it seems worth it. Not too much, but it wouldn't be a great loss if I stopped going to the classes because I didn't like it.

It's the first time for me to be in the high school that I walk past on my way to the shops. It's as drafty inside as it looks from the outside. There seems to be a real mixture of people in the class. Some look very arty and trendy, some look like mums, and there are a couple of guys also. In the first exercise we all introduce ourselves and explain what we hope to get out of the classes.

"I want to write a book," I say.

"Well you've come to the wrong place," says the teacher to all of us nodding our intention of this ambition. "This is a short story writing class."

I have mixed feelings at the end of the first class. Everyone seems to be very good at coming up with sharp funny pieces during the mini exercises we do. We are given the task of a bit of writing to do before the second class.

Ten minutes is the time we have been told to get something down on paper. Simple enough, but it isn't until twenty minutes before the next class that I hastily scribble something which I feel rather doubtful about reading out.

"Did I ask you to write a masterpiece?" says the teacher as I caveat my attempt before I read it aloud.

"The task was to write for 10 minutes. Did you do that?" she continues.

"Yeah...but..." I bluster.

"So don't give yourself a hard time," she says gently.

I miss week three because I have to go to the South Coast for some client work which has come in. I see the knowing glint in the teacher's eye when I explain this.

"Hah, she thinks that's it, that I've given up," I smile to myself.

Instead, as I'm getting off the ferry at Circular Quay the next morning I see a tramp sitting on a bench engrossed in doing a scratchie. As I wonder what he would do if he actually won, I sense an idea brewing for a story.

The weeks pass quickly. In week six I finally own up to my 'Tramp and the Scratchie' story and read it out to the class. Tongue-tied and nervous I feel like I make a hash of it, but I am proud of myself for having actually created something. There is a warm response.

I walk home on a high that night. These people are no longer arty and trendy or mums to me but have names and personalities so different to what I initially expected. Some work and some don't but I really don't know what most of them do apart from, like me, they write.

By the time week ten rolls around, it seems to have drawn to a close all too quickly. We all bring in a story and some food, and have a picnic in the candlelight that gives our last class that extra ambience, while we read to each other. I've written three stories in total and we're all enthusiastic about how we will continue to maintain our momentum. A lot of us have ideas for different writing projects and thanks to the teacher I have had an idea for a book. It came from the outcome of one of her writing exercises and the prospect is a little frightening, but very exciting also.

When I get in after that last class, I put the kettle on as usual. I also remember to take the plates out of my bag, for the cheese and biscuits I had taken along, and put them into the sink. I pick up the remote for the video player and hit rewind. As my tea brews in turn the lamp on next to my sofa and flick the TV on. Then, with tea in hand, I settle onto the sofa to enjoy my recordings of Big Brother and Friends.

SELF TAUGHT

A story by Tony Smith

It was not quite the University of the Third Age but Ted was very proud when he thought about his new class. All his life Ted had been the local expert on lawn mowers. When a mower would not start or a part had to be replaced, Ted was your man. He could sharpen and replace the blades before most people could work out how to take them off, and he could tell by the smell of the fumes if the spark plug was coking up.

Ted had a staff of six these days, including an office manager, and so he could spend a little more time after hours thinking about other things. Ted had built his business through hard work and his main means of learning was through trial and error – that, and talking to people, asking careful questions and training his memory so that he did not forget anything. Ted had no formal training, but now, at the age of forty-five, he was about to begin a study of the theory that lay behind his great interest. He promised himself that he would qualify as an engineer and acquire the diplomas and certificates to match his expertise.

Being a practical person, Ted knew that he would have to start at the very

beginning. But even if he had to unlearn some things and re-learn them, he was determined to succeed. That was why he had enrolled in a class at the local technical college in the most basic skill he would need. Before all else, he had to learn to read.

One of the great things about Ted was that he had a very direct and matter of fact approach to life. He knew that he could not read. Well, this was not strictly true because he could read some words but not when they ran together into sentences. Like most people in his situation however, he thought of himself as being unable to read. He thought that everyone else in the world could read everything they wanted to, and what's more, he assumed that they did read. Not for a moment did he imagine that anyone who was able to read would simply not bother.

So here he was tonight opening the classroom door, humming the Beethoven theme known as the 'Song of Joy'. He was dressed very smartly and there was no hint of mower fumes about him. Ted had no problem counting, and as he had been told that he would be in a class of six, he knew that one of the people sipping coffee and chatting must be the teacher. As soon as he entered the room, a woman in a bright yellow dress moved across and shook his hand. 'Hello' she said, 'I'm Jenny' and pointed to a label on her dress.

When Ted introduced himself, Jenny said she thought so and pointed to a desk where there was a label with his name waiting. Ted thanked Jenny and picked up the label and put it on. Even though it was the only one left, Ted read his name to be sure that it was his and that it was correct. He was sometimes called 'Edward' or 'Ed' or even 'Teddy' and wanted to make sure the label said 'Ted'. He much preferred the sound of that. Ted knew his name pretty well and could recognise it in most forms of print and style. He was less confident when he had to find it in handwriting.

The label was on a little plastic card with a pin and a clip so he clipped it to his shirt on the left breast pocket. He then went to meet his classmates. The only other male wore a label that bore the letters 'V – i – c'. He also wore thick glasses and looked to be aged in his fifties. 'Am I glad to see you' he smiled, extending a hand to Ted. 'I'm Vic'.

'Oh right', replied Ted. 'I've seen your name on many a mower'.

'That's it. "Turning grass into lawn"'. Here Vic squinted at Ted's label and asked 'and you are?'

'Oh sorry Vic. I'm Ted. So all the others had pink booties did they?'

Vic chuckled. 'Looks like it. Come and meet them anyway'. Although he had only just met them, Vic introduced Carla, Beth, Kerry and Sue without missing a beat. When you can't rely on reading, your memory gets trained extra well.

Ted found Beth the most interesting. She wore her label on the right of her red blouse, so she was probably left-handed. The blouse looked home-made and had a basket of flowers on the collar, so he summed her up as the artistic type.

Jenny ushered them to the centre of the room where they sat in armchairs arranged in a circle. The classroom was not like any Ted had seen before. Outside the circle of armchairs were six single desks and at the back of the room another six had been set up in a cluster. Around the walls were stools and benches with computers, radios, tape recorders and earphones. A television set occupied one corner and a whiteboard on wheels was in another.

They sat in the armchairs and discussed some details about parking and telephone numbers for emergencies – house-keeping matters, Jenny called them. Ted looked around the circle at the faces of his

classmates and thought that he could very easily get used to this learning business.

Jenny explained that all students would have a locker so that they could leave things there. Unlike a class at a school, they would all be working on programs of their own and they could keep these locked away for privacy. It was up to each members of the class to bring work to the teacher when he or she wanted some assistance. 'The best education involves people taking control of their learning', she said. 'The teacher can help you decide what you are ready to do next and helping you find the right materials, but you will learn at your own speed'.

To make sure that everyone understood what she meant, Jenny asked whether anyone had been able to learn anything between arriving this evening and sitting in the armchairs. Everyone volunteered one fact and then Jenny explained that she had just heard six examples of independent learning in action. The examples included trial and error, building on past knowledge, asking for information, a simple experiment, counting and an educated guess. She said that these were natural learning techniques and ones they would use time and again.

'Anyway', she concluded, 'let me worry about identifying what you are doing. You just keep on doing in and your progress will be assured. Now, are there any questions?'

Six students laughed in unison. Ted was quick to respond. 'Millions!' he said 'when do we start?'

Now it was Jenny's turn to laugh. 'Oh Ted. I think you've already started, don't you?'

FRIENDS OF ALW
Julie McCrossin
'Life Matters' ABC Radio National
"My mother and I have gone along to short courses together and really enjoyed it. It gives us new things to talk about."

ZAK'S WORDS

A story by Carmel Williams

I wait for a letter even though I know my parcel would barely have landed. I stand at my gate imagining the brown paper package being tossed from cargo plane to bus to old pickup truck on its journey to Kisumo. I think of him opening it, turning the books over in his hands lifting them to his nose to sniff the newness of paper glue and ink.

> "Words, Australian Mum.
> So many words"

Zakaya and I met in an unlikely time and place. Room 23 at The local learning centre on the wettest night in July. His black neck stuck out from a too big jumper and his curly hair was fuzzy with rain. He glanced up at me and smiled shyly. The seats at the front had filled up and I was happy to head to the back and sit next to him.

To a fifty something grandma who'd only ever written shopping lists and notes for her kids, the back of the room seemed the most comfortable spot.

The class spent the first part of that evening listening to the tutor telling us where our adventure into short story writing might take us. He explained what assignments we

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would do, what authors and books we would meet along the way and practical information about where the kitchen and loos were located. Most of the class seemed to have the same sense of anticipation that I did, but as I took a sideways look at the young black face beside me I realised that he hadn't understood much of what had been said. What was he doing here?

At coffee break the smokers braved the damp back veranda while the rest of us huddled around the urn in the kitchen. The young man seemed uncertain and straggled behind moving from one leg to the other in the doorway.

"Tea of coffee" I asked and smiled. He pointed to a tea bag and took the cup as I filled it for him.

"There's an honesty box," I said as I put in my own fifty cents. He shoved a hand into his jeans pocket, brought out some small notes and coins and held them out in front of me. I took some coins and dropped them in for him.

"I don't mind playing Mum" I said, aware of the other students staring at him.

He drank his tea without saying anything, his back pressed up against the kitchen wall, seemingly cut off from the rest of the chatter around him.

After class I said goodnight to everyone and started the long wet walk up the hill to home. How stupid not to bring the car I thought but I had done it deliberately, knowing that waking filled in more time and that the moment of opening a dark front door and hearing 'cuppa's on love' was delayed for a while. I heard him panting before I saw him.

"Australian Mum you wait please".

I turned as he stood heaving, catching his breath.

"Zakaya" he said, jabbing himself in the chest.

"Ellen" I replied trying to juggle my umbrella in the wind.

"Mum?" He looked confused and I realised he thought my name was Mum from our meeting in the kitchen.

"No no it's Ellen" I laughed, but from then on I became Australian mum or just mum.

Zakaya took the umbrella from me that night and swinging it aloft like a band leader's baton he walked and talked me to my gate. He told me about coming to Australia on a six month visa to stay with a mission worker who had sponsored him. He was nineteen and came from a small village in Kenya where his family had once raised corn and maize.

"Did he want to write short stories?" I asked.

"Yes" he answered quietly. "I want to write about my family".

Something in his voice stopped my asking any more questions but as we turned the corner to my house I wondered about his obvious lack of understanding in class, yet his ability to speak English so well.

As if he read my mind he said, "In Australia you speak fast. It is hard to understand. I cannot write English words so well. I want to learn this".

"Would you like some help?" I asked almost before I realised. He nodded and grinned and pumped the umbrella up and down, soaking both of us.

From then on Zakaya became a regular afternoon visitor. I got Frank's old dictionary out and we would look up words that had come up in class or that he had heard on the radio. He would write in bright texta in an old exercise book he had labelled 'Zak's Words'. The boys at the church he attended had shortened his name and he was chuffed to have an Australian as well as an African name. He would sit at the kitchen table for hours, head down over his words. Every so often

he would look up and say "What word this, Mum?" "Crazy word this".

We'd joke about funny pronunciations and he would try me out with African words, giggling uncontrollably when I couldn't get my tongue around them. Often he would stay on for tea and we would take turns in reading aloud from one of our assignment books. Zak had an adolescent's appetite so I cooked up things I hadn't tackled since the boys left home. The house seemed warmer than it had in a long time. We sometimes looked through my photograph album and he would want to know about the family, but when I asked about his he seemed to close in on himself and I knew not to pry any further.

Our first written assignment was a short story entitled, My Journey. I asked Zak if he needed help with his and was surprised when he said no. For a week before the assignment was due he didn't come around and I was worried that he was finding it too hard and didn't want to tell me. I was relieved when I arrived at class and he was in his usual place. A few of the front row students read out their work. A Ski Trip. Trekking Expedition. A Journey to Sacred Sites.

The tutor asked if there was anyone else who would like to read out loud. Zak got to his feet.

My Journey

My journey started in Kisumu where once my family lived. When I told the church worker I was going on this journey he lent me his sandshoes. I was very happy because I knew that no one else in Siaya would be wearing shoes. Siaya is a three day walk from my village along the river Yala. I walked very slowly so that the dust would not get on my shoes.

I walked slowly too, because I knew that when I got to Siaya I would be very sad. On the second day of walking I had to hang the shoes around my neck because they made my feet sore.

When the sickness comes in my country people say it is because devils jump into your body and chase away your spirit. Sometimes the priests can kill the devils but not always. As I walked I felt very sad because the sickness had chased away the spirits of my mother and father and my two older brothers. And now Adiambo.

The workers say that it is not really the devils who make people sick, it is because of drinking dirty water and having no crops to eat when the rains don't come.

Adiambo had a big smile and could run very fast. She was the daughter of my mother's sister and a year younger than me. Twice she came to Kisumu when we were young and there had been good harvests. While the grown ups sat inside our house and ate and talked, Adiambo and I raced each other to the river and splashed into the cool water. At sunset we dug in the mud for crabs and water beetles.

I thought about my cousin as I walked alone for three days and I felt very tired and sad.

When I got near to my Aunt's house in Siaya I washed my feet in the river and put on my shoes. I knew Adiambo's spirit would be watching from a high tree and seeing the shoes would make her happy.

That was Zak's first story about his family. He has written many more and is due to start studying journalism in Nairobi. We write to each other often and his letters always begin with "Dear Australian Mum". I feel a sense of pride as he gets closer to being a published writer. I like to think that his new journey started here, in a small town on the wettest night in July.

GATHERING MOMENTUM

A story by Andrea Mettenmeyer

Who was Leon Trotsky? The question was asked of me over coffee on an unremarkable winter's day.

Leon Trotsky? It sounds Russian. Wasn't he one of the pigs in Animal Farm? Or one of the other farm animals? Which would make him a central figure in European History. I guess. I don't know, I really don't, why are you asking me?

Because people are always talking about things I know nothing about.

I know, me too. We're not very worldly, are we? But it's probably just a life experience thing. I suppose that we'll catch up in a few years.

By default? By gradual absorption of things? Do you really think so?

I know, it's not really good enough, is it. We should do some kind of crash course in history and religion and philosophy and languages and culture studies, all rolled into one.

At that point, to my friend Paul and I, Adult Education became a verb. A desperate action fuelled by the realisation that somehow, mid-twenties and post-University, we knew almost nothing about anything.

In search of educational enlightenment, we began to visit galleries and exhibitions, to attend evening classes, public lectures and film screenings, to read popular science and philosophy, to swap great works of literature and then discuss them at length. Gathering momentum, we dabbled in Life Drawing, heard performances of early music, snuck into astronomy lectures at a University, decided over pizza what Marx meant when he said that religion is the opium of the masses, and finally learned to write numerals the Roman way.

Our forays into the Adult Learning scene stretched beyond the ordinary boundaries of organised classes. Our definition of education broadened to include anything we had not tried before; our decision to become more worldly stretched to every corner of imagination. Between us we played team sports, ate chicken for breakfast, camped in the snow, listened to The Beatles and ABBA, discovered what the famed shower scene in Hitchcock's Psycho was all about, learned to appreciate wine and to know the difference between moselle and chardonnay.

We swapped stories of our urban adventures with bravado and developed an awards system to encourage each other to try stranger things. Friends became infected by our sudden enthusiasm for experience and joined us in dreaming up obscure challenges. For some of us, this had dramatic and life-changing consequences. Lejla moved to London, after a series of art history lectures cemented her wafting dreams to work and travel in Europe. She is the current holder of our Distance Award, as London is almost as far away as one can travel from here without leaving the surface of the earth. In turn this inspired the Leaving the Surface of the Earth Award, created for Michelle who took up ballooning and flying with zest, abandoning her healthy fear of heights to a dizzying disregard.

It has not been without twists and hilarity. I dare not mention the award Mark received for his parading in the Sydney Mardi Gras. But I can tell you that the depth of Jane's loathing of the semester of Thi Chi classes she had signed up for was not appreciated until the day she fainted away in a twisted pose and was unwillingly revived my a man only too happy to practice his first aid course on so enchanting a victim. For this she was awarded the Loss of Consciousness Award and a Medal for Perserverance in the Face of Desperate Boredom.

Beyond wine appreciation, books, evening art classes and inspiring our friends to become daredevils, Paul and I became ever more serious about education. He went back to University to study for a Masters in Science Communication, changing direction in his career and finally discovering what it is he wants to do. I went back to University also, to become a writer. I learned a language and traveled to marvelous places.

I asked Paul recently, *Do you feel more worldly? Do you think it's working?*

I don't know, he sighed. *The more I know, the more there is I know I don't know.*

"Wisest is he who knows he does not know."

It doesn't end. It's not supposed to. I don't intend to ever retire from education. The world is an amazing place and there isn't time to stop learning. Adult Education is a way of life, of continuing to expand and extend your circle. With education your life has enormous potential. Your life is you, and everything you are, enhanced by the knowledge, wisdom and experience of six billion others and the history of the people who have lived before us.

LEARNING TO READ

A story by Catherine James

Sitting on the floor in pyjamas, arms outstretched, she shuffles the words around. She can make sentences with them because they fit together like jigsaw pieces. She chooses to make sentences she has already seen, but then at the last moment she exchanges 'ball' for 'red' and 'sock' and that's what Betty catches. She shuffles the words again and makes a new sentence. She doesn't yet know the meaning of some of the words, but she uses them anyway. She can hear her mother's voice in the background repeating words over and over again because the lady does not know them.

Tuesday night is adult literacy night. Alice parks outside the YMCA hall and collects her books together. The caretaker has already unlocked the door. Alice can see the light on inside and she knows the urn will be boiling. She takes a quick breath in before climbing the concrete steps leading into the hall. She registers the familiar smell of dust, sweat and chemical cleaners and her body prepares itself for the night ahead. Alice never quite knows what to expect from her evenings here. She is a trained English teacher, but she has learnt that this doesn't mean she can teach people to read.

Roslyn, another volunteer tutor arrives and together she and Alice talk about how the classes are going. Roslyn thinks she made some progress with Martha last week. Martha is 53 and she brings along her letters from a sister in America. Her sister writes to her regularly and draws pictures to accompany the words so Martha might understand them. Her letters always consist of two sheets of thin aerogramme paper. Roslyn and Martha struggle through the letters together. Roslyn repeats the words and points to the pictures over and over again until Martha remembers them. Sometimes they read the same letter for two or three weeks in a row. Martha gets frustrated easily and her expletives often echo throughout the room as she bangs her plump fist hard on the table and wriggles ungainly in her chair.

Different people attend the class each week, but there are also the regulars. Alice has spent the last three weeks with Roy. Roy is in his late sixties and always wears Hard Yakka beige overalls over a white shirt with the first two buttons left undone; a tangled mass of grey hair protrudes from just under his chin and out of his ears. Roy's cheeks are sculptured hollows. A large lump on his right shoulder, which causes him to hunch

over, distorts his back. Roy lives on a farm and owns a tractor. It is the many typed pages of the tractor manual that he wants to learn how to read.

Jane is another regular. Jane is thin, petite and shakes constantly. Her speech is slurred and difficult to understand particularly when she is nervous. During the class when she begins to relax, her shaking subsides slightly and she can manage to pronounce more of the words. Jane brings along books from her daughter's bookshelf with big print and lots of pictures to illustrate the words. She would like to be able to read them to her daughter.

Tonight, the regulars are all there and Alice sits down with Roy. Together they go over the manual again, painstakingly slowly, page by page. First, she reads the words to him and then asks him to repeat them. When he knows the word he flicks back to the small diagram of the tractor on the front page and shows Alice the part. It is then that Ray comes alive. The tiredness in his voice leaves and he is animated. Alice can't help smiling despite her frustration that he is not focussing on the task and she is not interested in tractors. Still, she knows they're making progress, she can see his interest in the tractor is helping him to make sense of the words.

Out in the backyard, she sits singing on a swing. She sings whatever words come into her head and then finds words to rhyme with them. She sings about a dog that eats a frog and repeats this chorus over and over again. She smiles as she sings and then jumps off the swing and runs inside. She has decided to write a book instead. She pulls out her container of crayons and some paper. She folds it in half and begins to write. Her text is child-lavish and fills the page; the last letters in her words are less than half the size of the first. She staples it down the side and admires the bright pink frog on the front.

One night, a man and his ten year old daughter come along to the class. Alice sits down with them and begins with a simple exercise in order to gauge their level of ability. She asks the man to read aloud. He's slow. He sounds out the part of the word he knows and guesses at the rest. There are only a few words that he cannot get. Alice lets him continue, not realising his intense concentration and difficulty. When he has finished the paragraph, he glares at her. He's angry and he yells at Alice telling her that it was too hard. Alice tries to calm him down and then focuses on the girl. The girl refuses to read. Alice feels lost and thinks about Ray and his tractor manual and asks them what they would like to be able to read. The man tells Alice that she has no right to let his daughter go through what he's been through. He asks Alice how she would feel if she couldn't even fill out her own dole form. He grabs his daughter's arm and leaves the class.

She sits on her mother's lap, sweet from her bath. A few strands of hair that have not yet dried, are plastered to her forehead. Her skin glows warm in her pyjamas. They sit together in the armchair by the fire and she produces her school reader. She is agile on her mother's lap and wriggles until she is comfortable. Her voice is strong and confident as she reads first the title on the cover, then the title again on the inside sleeve. She points as she reads the words, more out of habit and mimicry than to keep her focus. Her pleasure is in the reading, not the story. She likes the words and the sound of her voice as she reads them aloud. She waits expectantly for her mother's praise.

Alice returns home exhausted that night. It's not the first time that she almost believes it's impossible for these people to learn to read, now that they are beyond their first six years of life; the crucial language years. She wishes she could turn back the clock for these people, to read to them as they fall asleep, to tell them stories that they can never get enough of, to make up for lost time.

Alice notices the light in her daughter's room is still on and she peers inside. Her daughter lifts her head up from her book and smiles at Alice as she approaches.

"Look what I made Mummy," she says handing Alice the book. Proudly, her daughter reads it aloud.

"I like your picture of the frog" Alice says when they have finished.

Her daughter grins and tells Alice the rest of the story that she didn't write in the book. Alice soothes her daughter's excitement and gently tucks her in.

"Can you sing to me Mummy?"

For a moment all Alice can think about are the nursery rhymes that she still has in her head sung or read and recorded in her mother's voice. She realises what she will sing to her daughter now will stay with her forever. She sifts through the lyrics in her mind searching for something she would like to be lasting, but all she finds is nonsensical verse and old fashioned images she does not wish to pass on.

"Can I tell you a story instead?"

Adult and Community Education class at the Bendoc Progress Associations' Resource Centre during Adult Learners Week 2001, East Gippsland, Victoria.

I'M NO PHILOSOPHER BUT...

A story by Frances Overheu

Geoff rolled the dice. The clock on the mantelpiece chimed four times.

Looking back now, it was then that Destiny struck. Things were never the same again. The dice rolled across the board. Double Three. Just Visiting. Geoff threw again. Ten. Free Parking.

Geoff breathed out. Sam's bottom lip quivered and Hannah and I looked at each other. Things were still pretty tense.

It was 1996. A Sunday in June. Winter had arrived only the day before and the rain was still lashing against the big picture window in the lounge room. We were sitting by the fire playing a highly charged game of Monopoly when four o'clock came. Sam had three houses on Vine Street. Geoff owned Park Lane and Mayfair but was strapped for cash. He had just paid Tas with his $200 for passing Go and was heading for Vine Street. Landing on Free Parking was only a temporary respite. I was debating whether to form a syndicate with Hannah. There was no way we were going to stop the game.

The Never Ending Story Writing All Stars, Victoria
Photo by Valentina Vervich (Winner of the ALW 2001 Ricoh Australia Photo Competition)

The Never Ending Story Writers all share a love of writing but this group of multi-talented people do not confine themselves to the written word. Upon the occasion of one member's birthday, the other members have been known to perform musical numbers par excellence. 'Knees Up Mother Brown' and 'Alice Blue Gown' have never sounded so good. This group of writers also likes to share its culinary skills. Afternoon teas are filled with many delicacies. Valentina received a Ricoh RDC 6000 digital camera for this winning entry in the Adult Learners Week 2001 Ricoh Photo Competition.

'Can't we stay and go back tomorrow morning?' asked Sam. He had the most to lose.

'It'll mean getting up very early,' warned Geoff.

'We don't mind!' said Hannah and Sam in unison.

I formed a syndicate with Hannah and left her to play for both of us while I searched out something for tea.

Now, I am no philosopher but I do know about Destiny. For starters, when it happens it comes out of left field. Secondly, even though you may recognise the moment, you can never imagine the result. And third, the only certainty about Destiny is that it changes things.

Back then Geoff was a farmer and I was his wife. We ran cattle. The kids, Hannah and Sam, came up to the farm by bus on Fridays and we took them back to their mum in Perth on Sundays. Life was good. But after Destiny's visit that Sunday, weekends with the kids were longer and early Monday morning starts became the norm.

'So?' you might ask. 'Big deal!'

Well, that wasn't the half of it. That was just the beginning!

With the change in routine we

dropped the kids off at 7:30am every Monday morning. Too early for the shops to be open, we had time on our hands. Cappuccino and toast for breakfast at Manzini's over on Oxford Street became ritual. A pleasant way to start the day. Geoff read the paper and I did the crossword. We wondered why we hadn't thought of it sooner. We began to look forward to our Day in the City. A whole day. Shopping and errands for the farm only took up a small part of the day, and somewhere along the line we landed up going to Claremont Golf Club at 9:00am for Beginners Golf. Geoff was good but I fell by the wayside early on. The frustration of hitting the ball in one direction and then spending half an hour searching for it in another was more than I could handle.

After the day's chores we would take in a movie before heading home late. It wasn't long before Evening Classes were mentioned. I went to the library and got all the gen. For some reason Japanese One appealed to me and Geoff rather liked the sound of Blues Harmonica. It was daunting at first and coming from the country we were definitely out of our comfort zone. But we bolstered each other up and treated it like a big adventure.

The second term it was Japanese Two and Landscape Painting. And Morning Golf was replaced by Tai Chi in Kings Park. It was during this term that Geoff rediscovered his childhood love of Art hat had been suppressed by years of running the family farm.

By fourth term we were well-seasoned evening classers. We knew the corridors of Perth Mod School like the back of our hands and at the beginning of a new term took delight in helping newcomers to find their respective classrooms.

By fifth term we were in trouble. We ran out of classes. My thirst for learning a language had waned and there was no Japanese Five anyway. Geoff had done both the Monday night Drawing Classes: Beginners and Intermediate. He wanted to go further but the only Advanced Drawing Class was at another School and anyway it was on a Wednesday. I considered Belly Dancing and Geoff toyed with the idea of Cooking Thai. But somehow it seemed a backward step.

As I have said, I am no philosopher but I have learnt something about Learning. Geoff and I had Learnt (with a capital L) all these Subjects (with a capital S) in a classroom, in a formal way. We had increased our Knowledge by a finite measurable Amount and we had the Certificates to prove it. But that was just the tip of the Learning iceberg, the stuff we could see and measure. Beneath the surface Geoff and I had learnt (small

A Canberra U3A recorder group in rehearsal. (photo: Green Advertising)

I) an enormous amount of intangible, unseen stuff (small s).

Life was still good, but Destiny had changed things. From being just fun and a bit of an adventure at the beginning, learning had become, not exactly an addiction, but more a necessity. Sure, we had learnt Golf, Tai Chi, Japanese, Harmonica, Painting and Drawing. But we had also learnt more about ourselves, what we wanted, what we liked, what we didn't like. A desire for more knowledge and an enjoyment of the learning process had entered our lives.

It is now 2001. Geoff is no longer a farmer. I am still his wife. He is a third year Sculpture Student at the Western Australian School of Art. I look after the farm and run the cattle three days a week. I do the books on MYOB. I write creatively in my spare time and go to my Writers Group once a week. I even got a Highly Commended Award in a Short Fiction Competition recently. Geoff is considering Curtin University next year so he can get his degree in Fine Art.

Hannah and Sam still come up to the farm at weekends. Hannah drives them up in her old bomb. She is at Uni now and loving it, not so much the Learning (the iceberg's tip) but more the learning (under the surface stuff).

Sam continues to win at Monopoly.

Internet lessons during Adult Learners Week 2001 at the Capricorn Coast Learning Centre, Yeppoon, Queensland.

FRIENDS OF ALW

Jennifer Byrne
Presenter
'Foreign Correspondent', ABC Television

"It always strikes me as a tragic notion that learning ends at school or university. I'm fortunate enough to work in a learning job – journalism – and that always reminds you how much more there is to know. Refuse to vote for any politician who doesn't emphasise the importance of education, science and new technology. They are our highest priorities.

"I want to learn more languages, astronomy, history and archaeology... The course books always seem very alluring so even if I didn't start off with a subject in mind, I end up wanting to do all of them.

"I've been studying Spanish. Despite two courses so far, I wouldn't rank it as a 'new skill', but more a 'skill-in-development'. I will be returning to more study this year!"

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PART III

OUTSTANDING LEARNING FACILITATORS

At its heart, learning is about the exchange of ideas, the transfer of knowledge, the development of skills and empowering people to live more satisfying lives. To allow the process of learning reach its full potential, it is necessary to have learning facilitator who is skilled in communication, and who is blessed with patience and understanding. Someone who is able to create a safe and supportive environment in which to learn. Each year, outstanding learning facilitators are honoured through Adult Learners Week Outstanding Tutor awards offered in each state and territory. Following is a small selection of the recipients of this award for 2001. The full list of Award winners appears at the back of the book.

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Cathy Rainey

Cathy was awarded the Western Australia State Adult Learners Week 2001 Award for Outstanding Tutor (Volunteer)

As director of the Perth Harmony Chorus, Cathy Rainey has given hundreds of 'ordinary' women, most of whom have had no formal training or experience in singing, the opportunity to develop their voices and experience the joy of musical performance. Cathy's is a story of a love of music and a commitment to long-term goals.

Since joining the Perth Harmony Chorus (PHC) in 1983 when there were only 18 members – Cathy has committed a great deal of her time and energy into developing the group into a world-class chorus. Her leadership skills have seen the chorus grow to 115 members. Beyond this, she has taken an active mentoring role in encouraging other women to establish choruses throughout the state of Western Australia.

In her role as Director of PHC, Cathy has taken the chorus to many competitions at state, national and international levels. The chorus' successes have been phenomenal: one of the many highlights has been the PHC's gold-medal performance in Perth in June 2000 when it attained the highest ever score achieved by an Australian chorus, resulting in its ranking of ninth in the world.

Women fulfil many roles in today's world and it is important for them to have time to pursue interests and foster personal development. For the last 17 years Cathy's commitment to her role as Chorus Director and her love of music has encouraged many women to become involved in PHC. She has provided these women with wonderful opportunities to experience the joy of singing together in a group.

Jason Learner

Jason was the winner of the Queensland Adult Learners Week 2001 State award for Outstanding Tutor

Jason Learner is a 24 year old, who after being unemployed on and off for more than two years, joined the Work for the Dole initiative with the Skylarkers 60 and Better Program at Inala. The program is a healthy ageing program based on the philosophy of community development which includes the principles of social justice.

As part of the Work for the Dole Scheme, Jason designed and ran a computer program, including a training booklet, that demystified computers for older people. He assessed each participant's needs and formulated an individual one-hour class. However, it soon became clear to Jason that there was a very high demand for his services and so he developed his one-hour class into a full program and 'Computers for the Absolutely Terrified' was born.

This program was designed to be non-confrontational, enjoyable and most importantly liberating, enabling the older person to gain skills every time they turned the computer on. The two two-hour lessons include everything from turning the computer on right through to the internet. After completing Jason's course, many participants are confident enough to pursue further computing lessons if they so wish.

Jason has also implemented a troubleshooting service for participants where they can phone in with concerns or queries they may come up against after completing the program.

Whilst Jason has finished his commitment with the Work for the Dole scheme, he continues to run the successful 'Computers for the Absolutely Terrified' program, working voluntarily three days a week. Indeed, the program has expanded and at times, Jason needs the services of three extra tutors. Sometimes these tutors are part of the Work for the Dole program. Presently, Jason is

trying to engage mature-age job seekers to take on the role of tutor.

Lorna Crane

Lorna was awarded the ACT Adult Learners Week 2001 State Award for Outstanding Tutor

Community art is a powerful means of drawing together people from diverse backgrounds. An arts program conducted by a highly skilled and committed tutor can benefit the lives of many people, especially those with disabilities.

Lorna Crane, has developed inclusive community ACE courses for people with mental illness. Lorna, a practicing artist, has worked in innovative ways with people with mental illness for the past nine years. In 1998, Lorna developed The Belconnen Open Art program (BOA). BOA is a model for inclusive mental health community arts programs and is run in collaboration with ACT Mental Health Service and Belconnen Community Service. This highly successful program has expanded across Canberra and the initial four weekly classes has now grown to twelve.

Lorna has a strong commitment to supporting people with mental illness and the results are innovative, successful and sustainable programs. The underlying concept is that there are mutual benefits for people of all abilities learning together. Additionally, the stigma surrounding mental illness is reduced. Therefore, each of the classes has a high ratio of people with mental illness alongside other people from the community.

The benefits of Lorna's classes have been presented at two national community arts conference and two national mental health conferences.

Jane Brown

Jane was awarded the Tasmania State Adult Learners Week 2001 Award for Outstanding Tutor

Jane Brown has worked in a variety of areas with a range of age groups for the past 20 years. Since 1995 she has been working at Claremont College on a part-time basis. For the past two years, Jane has worked with a special group of people to develop an innovative and creative program to address their needs: she has been responsible for developing and running the new, innovative Young Mothers' Program.

Through this program, young mothers are encouraged to continue their formal education.

Childcare can be an economic stumbling block for young mothers and so Jane negotiated with the childcare students to supervise the children of the young mothers attending the course. Another important issue that Jane successfully resolved was the setting for the program. By adapting Claremont Cottage – previously used by the Claremont College for accommodation – as both the childcare centre and the setting for the course, the women and their children have a safe and home-like environment.

Jane's appreciation of people's different learning styles means that she caters for individual needs and differences. Indeed, she encourages her students to investigate topics of individual interest and relevance to their lives. As a great deal of her work has been with disadvantaged people who may have experienced failure and rejection, Jane understands the need to set realistic goals for participants, to value their work along the way and importantly to treat people with respect and to honour their life experiences.

Ros Butcher

Ros Butcher was awarded the Victorian State Adult Learners Week 2001 Award for Outstanding Tutor

Ros Butcher has taught at the Donvale Living and Learning Centre for 11 years. She teaches a wide range of classes demonstrating her exceptional diversity and her ability to meet the broad range of needs of students.

Ros developed the 'Learn to Learn' program to identify and address the needs of students with specific learning disabilities (e.g. dyslexia). Tied in with this, Ros also has worked (largely as a volunteer) with Melbourne University to produce a recent textbook, *Learning Differently*. This project has been profiled at a range of regional and state conferences and it has generated a great deal of interest. As well as adult literacy providers, corrections units and secondary schools have also responded favourably to it. The 'Learning Differently' project has led to tangible results for students, some of whom have been unable to progress for years. Naturally, the students are ecstatic about their improvements which has led to greatly enhanced self-esteem. Ros' commitment and energy for the project have been exceptional.

Other innovative projects in which Ros has been involved include: developing online learning tasks for students with disabilities who are unable to attend classes; tutoring of a class (for older learners) which combines social opportunities with practice in writing; and tutoring of a Conversation and Community Group which organises excursions to allow ESL students to practise new vocabulary.

Joan Johnson

Joan Johnson was awarded the New South Wales State Adult Learners Week 2001 Award for Outstanding Tutor

Joan has shown exceptional commitment to teaching a range of writing programs in Adult and Community Education (ACE) Colleges in the Central Coast region and in the Adult and Community Education sector for over 12 years. Joan first joined a Creative Writing class in 1987 when she retired from work to care for her parents. Her aptitude for the subject was evident to her tutors and by 1989 Joan was tutoring at Bankstown Community College, having won several awards for writing, including the 1988 Auburn Bicentenary Short Story Award.

Since re-locating to the Central Coast in 1993 Joan has offered her services to local ACE providers. One of the reasons for Joan's expanding success is her capacity to adapt her methods and curricula to students' needs and wishes, using a variety of learning strategies and techniques. Her groups comprise people of all levels of ability, age, race and ethnicity.

To demonstrate her on-going commitment Joan completed the Train the Trainer course, an Outreach Access course and the Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment (at the age of sixty-eight!). She currently conducts classes in two localities as well as providing workshops, addressing interested groups and supporting community projects.

Robyn Ellis

Robyn Ellis was awarded the Northern Territory Adult Learners Week 2001 Award for Outstanding Tutor

Robyn is a carpenter by trade, but became frustrated with the construction industry and moved on to Mornington Island to train people. She dicovered that she was a good teacher and got on extremely well with people. After that, she moved to Cairns determined to become a TAFE teacher and go back to the Island to teach. Whilst she was in Cairns she was given a job at the Centre for Appropriate Technology (CAT), Alice Springs.

Robyn was employed by the CAT in 1995 as a lecturer and has since completed Certificate VI in Workplace

Assessor. RPL Assessor and is in her final year of a Bachelor of Teaching (Adult Vocational) at the Northern Territory University. Robyn won the Outstanding Tutor of the Year at the recent NT Vocational Training Awards.

She has worked tirelessly, under extremely difficult conditions in the desert of Central Australia to assist Indigenous communities, women in Indigenous communities in particular, to learn skills and to become independent and self-confident individuals. One example of this is how she helped the women of Yuendumu address health and hygiene issues associated with the Women's Centre Toilet. Another is the Kintore Women's Museum – a building build up from the ground up by the women and therefore treasured by the community, which exists to store sacred objects. She takes both western and Indigenous culture into consideration and approaches problem-solving with a combination of both, using culturally-appropriate (and therefore sustainable) solutions to problems.

FRIENDS OF ALW

Anton Enus
Presenter, 'SBS News', SBS Television

"I believe that there are two reasons to pursue lifelong learning: 1) acquiring new skills unlocks one's creativity and stimulates brain power, and 2) we often don't realise we have a particular skill, until tuition or coaching unlocks it.

"Australia needs to realise that investment in Education at every level, produces returns in every sector of society. I will never forget the joy I saw on the faces of older people in my former homeland of South Africa, as they acquired reading and writing skills.

"I wish I had the time to commit to learning an additional language. I really admire people who take on this challenge successfully, especially later in life.

"As I've discovered from 15 years in broadcasting and an eternity in life, one never stops discovering new elements to one's craft and skills. Doesn't it make perfect sense to seek profession assistance to speed up and maximise that process?"

The Canberra's U3A recorder group plays at the National Launch of Adult Learners Week 2001, National Museum of Australia, Canberra. (photo: Eddie Misic)

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Geoff Clark
Chairman, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC)

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People are in many ways leading the way towards a community culture of lifelong learning.

"The majority of Indigenous students in post school education and training are adult learners. Many are catching up on education and training opportunities not accessible to them in the past, and progress through basic enabling courses onto courses at the certificate, diploma and degree level.

"Lifelong learning plays a vital role in sustaining the cultural, social and economic fabric of Indigenous communities and plays a strong role in strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

"I strongly encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who want to develop their knowledge and skills to participate in the opportunities which may be available to them through Adult Learning".

'Adults Learning to Sculpt'
Photo by Gail Morse (Winner of the ALW 2001 Ricoh Australia Photo Competition)

After 35 years raising a family and working as an Administration Officer, Gail Morse felt it was time to return to the world of art, something she had studied in the 1960s, but had let slip over the years. She enrolled in life drawing and sculpting classes at the Linden St Kilda Centre for Contemporary Arts. In the class, she not only rekindled her passion for art, but made new friendships. She received a Ricoh RDC 6000 digital camera for her winning entry in the Adult Learners Week 2001 Ricoh Australia Photo Competition, entitled 'Adults Learning to Sculpt'. The photo was taken at the St Kilda Centre for Contemporary Arts.

PART IV

OUTSTANDING LEARNING PROGRAMS

BACHELOR SURVIVAL – WHAT SHALL I COOK TONIGHT?

Not all adult learning is about computers, workplace skills or recreation. Some of it is about the fundamentals of life, as the 'Bachelor Survival Course', a shortlisted entrant in the Adult Learners Week 2001 Ricoh Australia Competition, illustrates.

While gender stereotypes have recently begun to crumble, for a long time, in Australia, the man's role was outside the home – involved in 'work' – while the woman managed home affairs. So what happens when a man finds himself alone and without sufficient training in domestic management? Many men, in this situation, neglect key aspects of their health and wellbeing. A primary area of neglect is nutrition because many single men opt for bland, easy-to-prepare, and unhealthy meals.

The 'Cooking Small, Eating Well' program is a demonstration-based cooking and nutrition program developed by the Hawthorn Community Education Project in Melbourne. Initially its aim was to encourage older residents living in local Office of Housing units to eat well and maintain their independence.

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Since its inception, hundreds of community workers, groups and other service providers have taken part in the program. Out of the initial 'Cooking Small, Eating Well' program grew another program, the 'Bachelor Survival' course. The 'Bachelor Survival' program was developed to tackle the needs of older men and was developed in response to a request by the Melbourne Probus club.

Melbourne Probus is an all male club of retired professional and business men, aged predominantly in their 70's. Fostered by Rotary Clubs, there are around 4,000 Probus Clubs worldwide. The Clubs are designed to provide a social network for retired professional and business people. The Melbourne Probus approached the 'Cooking Small, Eating Well' program when they noticed that some of their members were finding it difficult to prepare meals for themselves and needed to be better equipped "to do for themselves".

Some had recently lost spouses and it was all too hard and daunting to think about cooking. Others found themselves in the role of carer and needed to learn to prepare meals. There were also many competent cooks among the membership who were keen to share their expertise. Others had never had the opportunity to develop meal preparation skills and now, in retirement, were keen to learn the skills to be able to cook from time to time.

Interest in food was common ground. A great friendship and camaraderie amongst the group provided a supportive and encouraging milieu - *but there was still the challenge of how to get started.*

Alan Heggen, an active member of Probus, took the initiative to follow up interest. He arranged opportunities for Judy Stanton, from the Hawthorn Community Education Project to speak to the entire membership – allowing for questions and follow up so the men were able to identify starting points. Twenty-one participants gathered for the introductory sessions – focussing on nutritious meal preparation for one or two. Dishes were demonstrated and tasted. There was plenty of discussion and exchange and no prior knowledge of cooking was assumed. The informal "peer learning" setting benefited all.

Enthusiasm grew and further sessions were developed in response to interest. This is now an ongoing group. The members are active in the planning sessions and evaluating the program. Their professional backgrounds often provide specific expertise in the sessions.

John Connard carving a roast as part of the 'Bachelor Survival' course. (photo: courtesy of Hawthorn Community Education project)

The sessions are structured around a number of themes. First participants consider how to prepare quick, but nutrious, meals. Next, the concepts of imagination and versatility are considered through exploring such things as the adaptability of mince and the great potential of stir-frying as a technique. Microwaving is also examined as a valuable alternative to other, more traditional cooking methods. Moving into more difficult territory, participants next tackle the roast with all its trimmings, learning to juggle the many complexities of timing and quantities along the way.

In 2001, two new themes were added. One, an introduction to home-style Asian cookery, including visits to

Asian grocers to unravel the many mysteries of the exotic and exciting ingredients available there. Another focus was on soups and casseroles.

The interest and enthusiasm generated by these more formal sessions led onto several Probus members leading sessions themselves. These have included a conducted tour of the Queen Victoria Market highlighting the breadth of culinary delights and bargains available, and an examination of the ways of cooking a range of fish – filleting, steaming, frying, cooking in foil, toppings and fillings for added flavour.

Participants have praised the program highly. Participants value in particular the opportunity to learn about techniques, tools and ingredients which for most of their lives had been remote from them. The style of presentations, which is peer-based learning, encourages a relaxed and friendly environment in which a two-way exchange of information and ideas can occur. Most importantly, the course has increased confidence. One participant expressed delight that it was now "within my capacity to go home and prepare the meals." Another was amazed to see "that cooking a roast was not as daunting as I first thought."

Now that these programs have been successfully piloted with the Melbourne Probus group, they provide a valuable model to be run with a wide range of groups. The focus is particularly on the interests of men gaining confidence to prepare quick, easy and nutritious meals that they enjoy eating.

WHY LEARNING CIRCLES? THE METHODOLOGY AND ITS BENEFITS

When we talk about learning often words such as 'enrolment', 'courses', 'classrooms', 'fees' and 'qualifications' come to mind. This is only part of what is meant by the word. Coupled with formal learning (long structured courses that offer qualifications), there is non-formal learning (short courses that do not lead to a qualification) and informal learning. Most of us participate in informal learning on a daily basis, whether it is working out ways of communicating better with members of our family, or getting advice from the local nursery about caring for plants, or sharing our views about current events with our colleagues over morning tea. While informal learning can be very casual indeed, it still has some basic structures and can be a powerful tool to facilitate the exchange of skills, knowledge and ideas. To facilitate this form of learning the 'Learning Circle' was developed as a tool. Many learning providers and community groups celebrated Adult Learners Week 2001 by presenting a learning circle.

Developed during the late 19th century as a tool to facilitate worker education, a learning circle is a dynamic, flexible, inclusive, and a highly participatory approach to adult learning. The essence of the learning circle is free discussion and exploration of an issue in a collaborative and democratic atmosphere – where all views are

valid. Learning circles allow people to explore issues at their own pace, drawing on each other's knowledge, skills and experience. Groups can examine common resource material to focus on issues of particular concern to them and their community. The discussions that take place in the learning circle can serve as the catalyst for community or individual action leading to positive change.

A learning circle kit can be used to facilitate the process and kits have been developed by Learning Circles Australia to facilitate circles around a range of topics. The kits typically contain resource materials designed to stimulate debate as well as hints on how to ensure that the conversations move forwards and remain constructive.

A learning circle not only facilitates understanding of a particular subject, but also allow participants to develop many valuable life-skills in the process. A learning circle enables participants to develop their own ideas and express them to others. Through discussion and dialogue, participants grow in confidence – confidence in their own skills and knowledge, confidence in what they have to contribute, and confidence in their capacity to communicate this to others. Learning circles encourage active participation, and can reach and empower participants who might otherwise feel that what they have to offer is limited.

Learning circles provide a cost-effective method of involving potentially large numbers of people. Common resource material, once produced, can be used by an infinite number of groups. Because they are not dependent on a particular location they can be used by groups of people or individuals in a variety of situations and locations such as community facilities, clubs, libraries, retirement villages, homes, or in the open air!

Over the past eight years Adult Learning Australia, through its program Learning Circles Australia, has worked towards developing a culture of learning circles within the Australian community. It may be better described as a culture of public or citizenship education using the learning circle methodology as a tool.

Learning circle programs can be developed for different target groups. One of the latest programs developed by Adult Learning Australia focuses on a sensitive women's health issue which aims to encourage older age groups to take charge of their health needs, and encourage their peers and family to participate. The subject matter – cervical cancer – is a confronting issue which older women would not, if left to their own inclination, like to discuss. The learning circle developed around this topic takes an innovative and thought-provoking approach to the subject by encouraging women to identifying their strengths, and to discuss their role as care-givers. Through these conversations they develop a commitment to taking responsibility for their own future health needs.

Learning circle kits have also been developed on environmental issues such as blue-green algae, dryland salinity, weather and El Nino, living with wetlands, coastal management and genetic engineering. Adult Learning Australia is presently discussing with Reconciliation Australia to produce a third edition of the very popular Aboriginal Reconciliation Learning Circle. This Kit has already been used by almost five thousand learning circle groups across Australia. The *Discovering Democracy* kit was launched in late 2001 and this is a powerful tool that allows participants discover how Australia is governed, and how individuals and communities can use government to facilitate community change. Another learning circle program uses the learning circles methodology for increasing opportunities for the Australian community to explore and lend their ideas and experiences to the task of

building safer and more prosperous communities.

There is virtually no limit to the subjects that can be investigated by learning circles.

'Adult Learners French Class' – Shortlisted entry in the ALW2001 Ricoh Australia Photo Competition. (photo: Barbara Glover, NSW)

FROM SPICE RACKS TO HOMES THE TRANSPORTABLE HOMES PROJECT

Often carpentry courses allow students to gain skills by working on small projects such as tables, small ladders and spice racks. While enjoyable for some, many students find such projects lacking in meaning and, as a result, their enthusiasm for study diminishes. The flexible nature of the adult learning sector often allows courses to adapt and grow to meet student needs and feed off their enthusiasm. This is no better illustrated than through the Transportable Homes Project developed through a partnership between the Bungala Aboriginal Corporation and the Spencer Institute of TAFE at Port Pirie. The project was awarded the South Australian State Adult Learners Week 2001 award for Outstanding Program.

The Transportable Homes Project was a joint initiative of Bungala Aboriginal Corporation and the Port Pirie Spencer Institute of TAFE with a vision to implement strategies to modify traditional training and assessment practices for Indigenous people.

Bungala Aboriginal Corporation placed ten employees within their organisation into a carpentry course offered by the Port Pirie TAFE. The importance of motivating students was recognised as paramount and it was evident from the early stages of the carpentry course that what the students really wanted – and what they could get enthusiastic about – were not the small 'meaningless' practice projects, but a much larger-scale project with immediate real-world importance. The students were keen to become more involved with construction work and what they really wanted was to build a house.

These ten participants of the Carpentry Course were given the opportunity to work on constructing cubby houses. Although only attending TAFE three days a week, the students were so dedicated to the project that they were able to finish it in approximately eight weeks. The cubby houses, painted in the Adelaide Crows' colours, were donated to local schools and an Aboriginal Education Centre. The installation of the cubbies in their new location also allowed the men to develop skills in laying concrete bases and constructing concrete paths.

Following the success of the cubby houses, the group were approached to build a small transportable house. This request would take the students even further from the classroom-based work and into an opportunity to experience – and learn from – 'real-world' work.

The Bungala Aboriginal Corporation had already enjoyed the success of a Building and Construction Team in Port Augusta, a group of 20 Apprentices and 6 Tradesman Supervisors so this produced the foundations to expand to Port Pirie and create the Port Pirie Transportable Housing Project. In addition, the skills of the participants involved in the carpentry course had developed so rapidly that the Bungala Aboriginal Corporation sought funds from DEWRSB (Department of Workplace Relations and Small Business) in order to place these men on four-year, full time Building and Construction Apprenticeships. Bungala Aboriginal Corporation then sought to employ a Project Coordinator with the ability to provide on the job supervision, training and mentoring to these Apprentices. Brenton Gambling, the groups' original TAFE lecturer was employed as the Project Coordinator for the Bungala Port Pirie Transportable Project as Brenton was already known and trusted by the Apprentices.

Transportable Housing Project, Port Pirie.

The Port Pirie Transportable Housing Project offers an opportunity for Aboriginal people to learn skills while working on large-scale projects that have real meaning to them. Through the project Aboriginal people are given the opportunity to construct housing for Aboriginal people and the mainstream community.

In terms of a learning program, this project takes students from having base skills in building and construction through to skill levels that will stand them in good stead for employment in the industry. In addition, students will develop self-confidence and would not only emerge with valuable skills, but real life experiences.

To offer the most relevant learning experiences, the course allows a 'rolling' intake of indigenous students, offering students an opportunity either to complete a full apprenticeship, or to complete one or more components of the course as appropriate to their skill needs and employment aspirations.

In addition to building and construction, additional training is available in horticulture, painting, house maintenance and computer training, literacy and numeracy development, course counseling, and counseling sessions to address both the personal and social needs of students are also included within the program.

A learning, rather than a 'teaching' environment has been created on the project, with non-indigenous trainers undergoing cultural awareness training to ensure students are able to learn in an environment that allows them to feel comfortable and ultimately reach their potential.

By allowing students to have a say in what they would like to do and, as a result, centering a learning experience around a real project, with real outcomes, the Port Pirie Transportable Project has been able to achieve a student attendance rate of 97%. But more than this, the project has allowed students to reach their full potential, develop self-esteem and come away with real-world skills

Representing the two national Adult Learners Week award winning organistaions are Greg Fryer from the Koori Program unit, Kangan Batman TAFE (far left) and Adrian Beltrame, Diversity Directions (second from right) with Dr and Mrs Hollingworth at the National Launch of Adult Learners Week, National Museum of Australia, Canberra. (photo: Eddie Misic)

and experiences. "The participants are so enthusiastic to have meaningful work with long-term possibilities. It has had such a positive effect on their lives and families", says Brenton Gambling, the Project Coordinator. "As we have worked together on this project we have developed a really good working relationship and a good social relationship. These Apprentices really take great pride in their work."

The broader community benefits too. The grand vision of the project is that the enterprise will be ongoing and continually provide opportunities for the Aboriginal community, not only through providing training in the construction industry, but by producing housing for the community. There is no shortage of students wanting to take part, and certainly no shortage of orders for their houses.

LET'S PLAY FAIR HELPING ADULTS TO CREATE POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN

As any parent will attest, having children is one of life's greatest learning experiences. Much of what is learnt through parenting is informal learning – simply learning through experience and often through a process of 'trial and error'. But parenting skills are also taught in a more structured way, through programs – such as the 'Lets Play Fair' program developed by Diversity Directions, in South Australia. Diversity Directions Inc were awarded the National Adult Learners—Week 2001 Community Learning Leader Award for their 'Let's Play Fair' program.

Adults that feature significantly in a young child's life will want the best for the child, and seek to provide the child with as many positive learning experiences as possible. But young children learn from everything. They absorb not only the 'lessons' that the adults in their lives aim specifically at them, but also everything else they see around them. Through what they see and absorb from daily life experiences, children make assumptions and start to develop an understanding of how the world works.

Often, children will notice and absorb things – attitudes and actions – that are barely perceptible to adults. From an early age they observe and acknowledge that there are similarities as well as differences in the way that friends and neighbours live.

While adults who care for children want to impart attitudes of acceptance, many adults despair at

being able to impart the attitude of tolerance to children, in a world in which racism, sexism, homophobia and many other 'isms' and 'phobias' are still all too prominent.

The 'Let's Play Fair' program is an innovative community-based education program for parents, early childhood service workers, educators and carers to enable them to confidently tackle the problem of discrimination in the early years of childhood. The program provides practical ways for parents, carers and educators to work with young children to recognise prejudice and promote tolerance and fair play.

The program was developed by Diversity Directons Inc. A community-based organisation. Diversity Directions is the peak children's services organisation in South Australia that advocates and works with families, children and communities of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds to improve access and participation into child care services. It provides additional services associated with training and work-force diversity in human services.

While the subject matter has been researched widely in Australia and overseas, there was little material available to the general public. The 'Let's Play Fair' program components – training sessions, a booklet, and a video – were developed using plain language at a level that assumes no prior knowledge of the subject. The booklets accompanying the video have been translated into Arabic, Persian, Kurdish, Vietnamese, Bosnian and Serbian.

The materials focus on the very beginnings of prejudice in children. It is in the very early years that children may experience a mixture of discomfort, misconceptions, insecurity and fear. This can develop into real prejudice unless adults intervene in simple pro-active ways. When both the adults who care for children and the children themselves feel confident to tackle prejudice, this is the basis for developing a harmonious and culturally diverse society.

The 'Let's Play Fair' program is an example of how adult learning is not always about enrolling in classes and obtaining certificates. It is also about community groups helping community members tackle serious problems through easy-to-understand and flexible delivery systems. But parents and carers were not the only people to have learnt from the program. Diversity Directions learnt a lot in the process as well.

The first thing that Diversity Directions learnt was that it does, indeed, have the capacity to develop these types of projects. Often, it is not until an organisation tackles something new, that it truly understands its own potential. Another major lesson learnt was about the complexity of an apparently simple project – community consultation, especially in a multicultural context, is a long, and at times difficult, experience. Out of this process, however, the organisation has emerged stronger and more confident and are now looking to expand the project nationally.

Meet the Woodcraft Guild. An Adult Learners Week 2001 event. (photo: George Harris)

GETTING COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER LEARNING RIGHT THE SKILLS FOR NATURE CONSERVATION PROGRAM

'Coastal Magic' – Shortlisted entry in the ALW 2001 Ricoh Australia Photo Competition (photo: Judy Stampton, Vic)

Many people are keen to make a positive difference to the world in which they live. Fueled by good intentions, they often join a local community volunteer group. Through these groups individuals often receive specific training in the particular area of the group's focus. Another common experience is that the training they receive takes no account of what they might already know. Furthermore, the dynamics of the group, or the manner in which training is delivered, may mean that progress towards the bigger goal is slow, uncertain or non-existent. In Western Australia, The Swan Catchment Centre, the Department of Environmental Protection's Ecoplan program and Greening Australia's Western Australia Bushcare Support Program worked together to produce the Skills for Nature Conservation program, a program that not only skills its participants in conservation techniques, but seeks to foster community growth in the process. This program was awarded the Western Australia State Adult Learners Week 2001 Award for Outstanding Ongoing Program.

As environmental degradation continues, and as society's awareness of the importance of environmental protection, restoration and ongoing management grows, more members of the community are wanting to pitch in and help save and restore local habitats and ecosystems. To meet these needs, there are an increasing number of community Landcare, Bushcare, RiverCare and CoastCare projects operating across Australia.

The *Skills For Nature Conservation* program in Perth, offers a diverse range of no-cost, targeted and timely training opportunities to help the growing and increasingly active volunteer conservation community in Western Australia tackle the threats facing Perth's unique environment.

Though Local and State government are active, many conservation outcomes would not be achieved without the hard work of volunteers. In WA, extensive weeding, seed collecting, surveying, mapping, planting, restoration of rivers, enhancement of habitats, writing of grant applications, raising public awareness and much more are all conducted on a volunteer basis by dedicated community members and landholders. It is important that these volunteer groups are provided with the necessary skills and knowledge so that that the planning and on-ground works are implemented in a technically correct and effective manner and projects are managed efficiently.

The *Skills for Nature Conservation* program aims to provide volunteers with the relevant skills and importantly, to motivate, reaffirm and recognise the contribution of volunteers and the important role that they play in achieving environmental outcomes.

The program is aimed at providing support for community volunteers predominantly, as well as state and local government officers, who are involved in river, bushland and wetland management or restoration. The program gives participants the opportunity to learn about restoration ecology, land management practices and practical techniques.

The Skills for Nature Conservation program is unique in that it combines technical training while recognising and supporting community development and independence. The diverse range of seminar topics presented illustrates the ethos behind the program. In 2001 the program included seminars that fostered skills in fungi and algae identification, in river restoration, techniques for managing weeds, skills in the safe use of herbicides, chainsaws and brushcutters for weed control purposes. Equally prominent in the seminar program were sessions on essential first aid, seeking sponsorship, developing a website, presenting public activities, and the principles of group dynamics. Thus, through the seminar series participants were able not only to strengthen their knowledge of the environment and how to care for it, but also to strengthen skills in building and advancing their own community groups.

Futhermore, program coordinators have received specific training in adult learning principles, such as the Action Learning Cycle, the seven basic conditions needed for effective adult learning, modes of learning and how to accommodate different learning preferences.

While seminars and similar training activities provide specific knowledge, the programs also actively encourage participants to share their own experiences and understandings with other members of the group. By allocating time in each session for the sharing of experiences, the traditional 'active expert' and 'passive learner' categories are broken down. Workshops and field trips reinforce the skills of the active landcare community, facilitate networking, team-building and builds camaraderie.

"A sound understanding of adult learning principles and a willingness to listen to and respond to the needs of your learners is essential to the success of a program of this nature", says Bronwyn Ryan from the Swan Catchment Centre.

Through the approach taken by the Skills for Nature Conservation, the needs of established, skilled groups and newly founded groups are met through program content.

Linda Taman, Coordinator of the Bennett Brook Catchment Group supports this approach. "Community involvement in natural resource management would not be as extensive and effective as it is today without the significant contribution to training made by this program," said Linda.

There is an increased recognition by government and the community of the benefit of working in partnership, sharing resources, skills and celebrating shared successes.

The Skills for Nature Conservation Program is a working partnership that aims to lead by example. Rebecca Millar from Greening Australia WA says "Greening Australia WA has been able to support the community far more and see improved on-ground conservation results by being part of this dynamic team. By having a common goal and by utilizing the three organisations resources we are providing a far greater support service to the community. We are demonstrating that partnerships work."

"By working together in partnerships we are able to ensure that we can maximise the use of our resources for community training. We also avoid duplicating training and thus provide the conservation community with a greater diversity of workshops," said Bridget Hyder-Griffiths, Ecoplan Coordinator.

"The program is an extremely cost-effective and easily transferable model for adult education where partner organisations are willing to combine resources, expertise and knowledge. We strongly encourage other adult learning organisations to adapt this model", says Bronwyn Ryan from the Swan Catchment Centre.

ANOTHER CHANCE TASMANIAN PRISON SERVICES EDUCATION & TRAINING PROGRAM

Most of us will never find ourselves 'on the inside' and, as a consequence, have little idea of what takes place in prison. While society might lock people up so as to punish them, or else attempt to make communities safer, for many of the inmates prison is an opportunity for a fresh start. For many, prison is an opportunity to catch up on skills that they have not been able to acquire, or is an opportunity to encounter something completely new. The Tasmanian Prison Services Education & Training Program is one of many such programs in operation around Australia. It won the Adult Learners Week 2001 Tasmanian State Award for Outstanding Program.

The Tasmanian Prison Services Education and Training Program provides educational opportunities for sentenced and remand prisoners and involves up to 120 individual inmates per month. Inmates serving more than two months are the target group.

The aim of the program is to empower offenders to reach their potential as responsible citizens by promoting a culture which encourages learning, and by providing appropriate vocational, education and training programs.

Through the program, learning opportunities are made available to those whose life skills, literacy and numeracy are very limited. TAFE Tasmania (recognised as the Training Provider of the Year in 2001) funds the literacy program with a part-time teacher. Prisoner students working to complete year 11–12 qualifications are enrolled in the Open Learning Program through the states' senior secondary colleges. Others who have a desire to take on tertiary study can enrol through various universities distance learning opportunities.

An integral part of the program is Vocational Education and Training (VET). This includes several short term courses involving computer modules, chainsaw, forklift, workplace health and safety and employment skills. There are also longer courses including traineeships and apprenticeships. Depending on security status, many students are able to attend classes at TAFE colleges or participate in workplace experience schemes outside the prison as part of the day-release scheme.

Inside the prisons, programs are conducted by peer tutors, prison

education staff, teachers and tutors (employed and volunteer) from 'outside'. The motivation and commitment of these learning facilitators in meeting learners' needs are exemplified by the variety of prison education programs available at each site.

In 2001, a small group of teachers registered with TAFE Tasmania embarked on a project to include painting, sketching, ceramics, art history and silk-screen printing in a program which resulted in the production of Artists Books that represented a competencies towards the Diploma in Art, Craft and Design. This work also formed the basis of the art exhibition entitled "Framed!" held at the Moonah Arts Centre during Adult Learners Week 2001.

The Centenary of Federation Project involved the creation of a 3.5 metre dinghy by 8 minimum security inmates, on site, under the supervision of teachers from the internationally known Wooden Boat Building School at Franklin. This activity too led to an accredited qualification.

Each inmate who wishes to participate in the education program participates in an extensive screening process which enables potential students' needs and interests to be defined and addressed. This process culminates in the introduction of an Individual Learning Plan. The plan details the needs, interests and skills of the inmate, maps a learning pathway, lists the support available, and outlines the reciprocal responsibilities of prisoners and staff.

The Tasmanian Prison Services Education and Training Program offers opportunities for inmates to participate in learning opportunities that they may never have tackled before and the results have been impressive. Many of the students have learnt to read and write while 'inside'. One student who could neither read nor write at the commencement of his sentence completed a 4 year apprenticeship while incarcerated. Many too train in IT skills for the first time. Other inmates with no prior experience of art, drama or music, have embraced the Arts, Craft and Design program and willingly work with visiting theatre groups and poets.

Other students have commenced university studies while inside and have continued these upon their release. One student whose background was in the technical area is well on his way to gaining a combined Bachelor of Arts and Law degree. In an initiative between prison education, prison industries and the Womens' Unit, three prisoners, participating in the Clothing Production Traineeship made over 600 sets of tops and trousers for male inmates. Another group of 5 students completed their Certificate II in Accounting which included units on Conflict Resolution, Negotiation Skills and computer training.

Far from being 'time out', time in prison offers many inmates an opportunity to catch up, move forward and change direction. Indeed this is what all forms of adult learning offer to the outside community as well.

TIWI MUSIC PROGRAM

After leaving school many young adults find themselves unemployed and, with little to occupy or to motivate them, they quickly find themselves bored and depressed. While imparting skills and knowledge, adult learning programs also help foster wellbeing among their participants – and through them, the community – by offering goals and opportunities for social interaction. The Tiwi Music Program is a good example of this. The Program was awarded the Adult Learners Week 2001 Northern Territory Award for Outstanding Program.

From its beginnings, the Tiwi Music Program was conceived as a community outreach initiative. The principal aim of the program was to focus on issues associated with boredom and social dislocation experienced by young adults in the Tiwi communities. These included an escalating number of break-ins, overuse of drugs and alcohol, and an alarming level of youth suicide. The program set out to provide alternatives to antisocial and self-destructive behaviour, to build self-esteem, to encourage self-expression and to develop individual skills.

The Northern Territory Aboriginal music industry has been the focus of developmental work for a number of years. CREATE Northern Territory, the Industry Training Advisory Body which covers the music industry in the Northern Territory, managed an Aboriginal music industry program which ran between 1993 and 1996. While using the program to give participants vocational skills and knowledge, CREATE also recognised the importance of music training as a meaningful activity that could attract significant participation by young people and engendering role models, pride and self-confidence.

As Barbara Pitman, Executive Officer of CREATE has noted, "It is important to recognise that creative programs with a community development aspect can have a major impact in terms of addressing social problems that are very costly in terms of health, lives and dollars." She argues that while measuring the value of Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs in terms of skilling people for employment is important, equally valuable are the wider social and community benefits that arise from such programs.

The Tiwi Music program had its genesis in February 1999 when Kilupuwuyu Puruntatameri, community elder and principle of Murrupurtiyanuwu Community School, made an application to the Aboriginal Benefit Account for a grant to purchase some band equipment. Kilupuwuyu saw the establishment of a band as a vehicle through which to address issues faced by young Tiwi people. "For those who left school... had no jobs and were hanging around the community getting bored, I though maybe music would give them something to do".

Following the initial purchase of musical instruments, Kilipuwuyu convened a meeting of key community members to discuss possible solutions to problems among the unemployed youth on Bathurst Island. Out of this and other forums, music was once again proposed as a solution and the Tiwi Music Committee was formed in partnership with support from local community organisations and the Northern Territory government. From this initiative came another, a decision to establish an Entry Level Certificate in Music Industry Skills based at the Xavier Community Education Centre campus in Nguju, in conjunction with the Community Education Centre's VET in Schools initiative and in partnership with the Catholic Education Office.

Know as the Tiwi Music program, this program has a part-time coordinator, a Darwin-based mentor and five part-

"Bugger": 4Wheel Drive Training on the Tiwi Islands' – Shortlisted entry in the ALW 2001 Ricoh Australia Photo Competition. (Tiwi Islands Training & Employment Board, Winnellie, NT, Photo: William Knights)

time Tiwi trainers delivering course competencies and undertaking workplace Assessor training.

The vocational aspects of the program develops the local skills base for industry participation. The program includes units on Workplace communication, group performance, musicianship, live and studio technology and Occupational Health and Safety for the music industry.

While the music industry is not yet a vehicle for major full-time employment opportunities, Aboriginal musicians from the Northern Territory have achieved a high profile as role models and entertainers within their own communities, with some achieving national and international success. Participants in the program have presented New Years' concerts, regular performances at local clubs and schools and recorded traditional music for the Olympic Torch ceremony. Among the bands to have participated in the program, *Nabarlek*, a young group from the Oenpelli region, has received international acclaim through a tour of Europe.

Beyond skills relating specifically to the music industry, the program also provides an opportunity for participants to improve literacy and numeracy skills through enjoyable hands-on experiences. Many participants in the program were previously reluctant to pick up a pen. With song writing as an incentive, participants are now keen to learn to write, which has been a major breakthrough. Moreover, as the equipment used for the program is owned by the community, participants in the course pay careful attention to written instructions relating to equipment such as the PA system and drum kit and in faxing orders. Numeracy skills are honed through equipment-related tasks, such as measuring leads during set up.

The musical focus of the program was initially on rock and roll music, but Tiwi gospel, Tiwi traditional and Tiwi rap have since emerged as topics. Through the types of music performed, the program has been able to provide community entertainment as well as maintain cultural heritage through song and dance.

The program has been very effective in addressing its principal goal of helping young adults regain self-esteem to become constructive members of the community. "A lot of young people are shy and won't come out in the open and mix", notes Kilupuwuyu Puruntameri, "Music has made a difference. There's a feeling of peace in the community".

Kerrie Taylor, Program Coordinator, agrees "it's a wonderful feeling to see the changes in some of the young people as a consequence of the music program. From head-down and no talk to enthusiasm, happy smiles and wanting to do everything to do with the music program, including cleaning up!"

Even more significantly, many observers of the program and members of the community have reported a reduced level of youth suicide since the commencement of the program and suggest that there may be a link.

PART V

OUTSTANDING LEARNING PROVIDERS

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES – BOYUP BROOK TELECENTRE

In a world of dramatic and constant change, having the flexibility to respond quickly to pressing needs becomes paramount. With the ability to respond swiftly to current learning needs, neighborhood houses, community colleges and similar forms of adult and community education are on the front line in the fight for community survival. This is no more evident than in towns in rural Australia. Not only do community learning centres in rural areas help residents skill for change, but the centres serve a vital role in keeping the community alive. One such learning provider, the Boyup Brook Telecentre, was awarded the Adult Learners Week 2001 Western Australia State Award for Outstanding Community Provider.

Boyup Brook is a small rural town in the South West of Western Australia. The town's main industry is agriculture, which includes sheep farming and cropping and, in recent years, tree farming, viticulture and other forms of agricultural diversification. Boyup Brook is a very active community especially with

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regards to sports and recreation. There are also a large number of community organisations in the town. Like all rural centres, residents of Boyup Brook have had to face dramatic changes in farming business practices, information technology, employment opportunities and community funding structures.

Boyup Brook Telecentre is a community-run organisation that is highly responsive to the learning needs of its local community – the programs it provides are guided by the learning that the community needs. By listening to local people, and developing positive partnerships and relationships with other organisations, Boyup Brook Telecentre has been able to develop and deliver courses that really suit the people in their community. As a result, the courses offered range from Tractor Driving to Quilting, from Life Drawing to Conflict Resolution.

Farm businesses have, in recent times, experienced a volatile economic climate. The dramatic transformations have required many women to find work off the farm. In response to this, the Boyup Brook Telecentre developed a number of courses to skill women for new employment and to help them manage their transition into the work-force or into other forms of education.

Literacy in information technology has, in recent years, become an essential skill for success in the modern world. To help members of the community become better skilled in this area, the telecentre devised a number of computer courses, tailored for specific audience needs. Some courses, for example, were focussed specifically on accounting software, to help local small businesses access taxation concessions offered to organisations with computerised systems.

The desire of older members of the community to become literate in information technology has also been addressed by the centre. 'Teleseniors' is an informal learning group, with participants planning what they are going to learn, which may mean there is a little desktop publishing one week and word processing or scanning the following week. It's a dedicated group that meets weekly under the guidance of a facilitator who assists whenever necessary.

Consultation with community groups identified several 'gaps' in service provision and also identified the training needs of volunteers who are active in the community. The Boyup Brook Telecentre has responded to these needs by establishing a series of workshops to assist community organisations. Initiating this series was a session of media training. The Workshop was hosted by Gerry Gannon, a radio personality with years of media experience. With over 20 participants from Boyup and the surrounding areas, participants learnt about radio and television interview techniques, how to craft a media release, how to compile a media database and how to manage a positive relationship with the media. The next workshop in the series will focus on identifying and accessing funding sources, followed by sessions on Conflict Resolution, People Skills and Effective Lobbying.

The Centre is also active in the development of a community cultural plan which seeks to upgrade the skills of those involved in various aspects of community service. As a result, the Boyup Brook Telecentre is confident that this will not only improve service delivery, but encourage the implementation of new service and projects. The Centre believes that this will add to the vibrancy of the community, increase pride and optimism in the future of the town.

MELBOURNE MUSEUM AND ADULT LEARNING

Adult learning takes place in a number of venues. When thinking about adult learning, many people picture community colleges, TAFEs and similar institutions. However, there is another huge category of adult learning venues that, in Australia, are often over-looked. They are visitor-based institutions: museums, galleries, heritage sites, discovery centres, botanical gardens, zoos and so forth. In such institutions, adult learning is often delivered through exhibitions, but many institutions also present dynamic and sophisticated learning programs designed specifically to meet the needs of adult visitors. Melbourne Museum is one such institution with a commitment to adult learning.

Art Students using the Melbourne Museum's' exhibits to think about size and perspective in art – Shortlisted entry in the ALW 2001 Ricoh Australia Photo Competition. (photo: Geraldine Zeccola)

When talking about 'education programs' in a museum setting, the word often only refers to p. ..ms for children engaged in compulsory schooling. Adult visitors are often either neglected, or else served by a hotchpotch of programs presented by a diverse range of museum departments – volunteer guides, audio tours, public and members programs. While these programs can be excellent, they often suffer from being created without reference to contemporary educational principles. Melbourne Museum is unusual in Australia in that it places its adult programs firmly in the area of 'education'.

The exhibits at the Museum cover a diverse range of topics, including Aboriginal Australia, Australian social history and Pacific Ocean cultures. On the science side, there are galleries focusing on the key areas of contemporary science, exhibits looking at human biology, a gallery exploring evolution, and a living forest. The Museum also features an Immersion Cinema Experience (ICE Theatre) – a big screen experience combined with individual interactive video consoles.

Finally, 'InfoZone' is the public research facility of the Museum, which enables members of the public to find out more about exhibits of particular interest.

Using these exhibits as a starting point, the Museum's adult learning activities draw upon key contemporary learning principles to develop both content and competency-based learning programs. Some of these have been developed in partnership with a range of adult learning organisations.

Drawing on George Hein's *Learning in Museums* (London: 1998), there is an overt recognition that knowledge cannot be imparted as a pre-packaged commodity, but is constructed in the mind of the learner. The Museum's programs accept that the learning that takes place in a museum setting has many entry points and so programs cannot pre-determine the path of the learner. The Museum's programs present a wide range of active learning modes, offer a range of viewpoints, and present opportunities to enable visitors to make personal connections with ideas and objects. Through this approach, learners are invited to conjecture and draw their own conclusions.

People learn in different ways, and the Museum's programs acknowledge

the seven intelligences described by Howard Gardner (linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily/kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal). At Melbourne Museum, visitors are encouraged to learn by interpreting objects, reading texts (both written and visual), playing games, observing art installations, interacting with performing artists, listening to spoken presentations, and using interactive multi-media.

Adults learn most effectively when in groups that they join by choice. Melbourne Museum encourages visits by groups of adults who attend with a common learning agenda, for example life skills, language, literacy, research skills, cultural awareness, science, or a shared interest in a specific content area like geology. Tours in languages other than English, including Auslan, are currently being offered, with programs for people with visual impairments also being developed. The Museum acknowledges the financial reality of many adult learners and charges adult students the same reduced entry price as school students.

To support more formal adult education courses, the Museum has developed the Forest Gallery Kit. Developed with assistance from Victoria's Adult, Community and Further Education Board, the kit is organised according to the four pillars of learning, as outlined by UNESCO. These four pillars provide categories under which learning activities are grouped – activities 'to do', things 'to know,' activities that help people 'live together', and activities that help develop the whole person ('to be').

Another kit helps visitors understand the operations and potential of 'InfoZone'. The *InfoZone* Kit introduces participants to the facility, by choosing a topic and asking them to find information in a variety of modes. Students use the on-line catalogue to assist them with research using books, CD ROMs, and videos. They are also encouraged to use the Internet, the object collection in InfoZone, and selected items in the exhibitions.

Adult Education classes often participate in the broader community by researching and/or observing particular celebrations or commemorative days. Various medical weeks, international days, and cultural days can provide a wealth of material for classes to work on, and a focal point for a visit to the Museum. The Melbourne Museum Adult Education Calendar guides visitors to aspects of the exhibitions that can provide interesting support material for events like Kidney Week, Senior Citizens Week, Chinese New Year, anniversary of the introduction of decimal currency, and a host of others.

The Museum also runs its own short Adult Education courses. One of these is Italian, in which students learn the language in the context of the galleries. Another is Art and Anatomy (in conjunction with the Centre for Adult Education), introducing art students to human anatomy and body parts in the Mind and Body Gallery. Another course teaches Botanical Art in the stimulating environment of the Forest Gallery.

The Museum's dedication to producing high quality and carefully thought out learning experiences for adult visitors has paid dividends, and many adult learning groups are now using the Museum regularly as a valuable resource for their own programs. Melbourne's University of the Third Age regularly use InfoZone for their classes. The Music Composition class at the Victorian College of the Arts has worked on a number of compositions in the Forest Gallery. These were assessed as part of the students' courses, and were performed in the Gallery as part of the Museums' birthday celebrations. In the formulation of an on-line unit of work on Biotechnology for the TAFE

Virtual Campus Hawthorn Community House worked with Melbourne Museum to develop some of the content, based on the Mind and Body Gallery.

Melbourne Museum is also a Registered Training Organisation, which means that they can accredit in-house training for staff and volunteers. Moreover the institution has a very active Evaluation and Research Division, which constantly evaluates visitor responses, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Programs are adapted as and when necessary.

Melbourne Museum is a fine example of how visitor-based institutions large and small can be used by adult learners and learning providers as valuable resource for an enormous range of content-driven – as well as competency-driven – learning programs. Moreover, the explicit grounding of the Museum's exhibits and programs within the fundamental principles of education, such as constructivism, multiple intelligences and learning preferences, extend the adult learning experience beyond the traditional, but very limited, text-panel or 'expert lecturer' approach to adult learning.

THE OLD AND THE NEW LIFELONG LEARNING THROUGH RADIO AND THE INTERNET

One of the messages that Adult Learners Week seeks to deliver is that adult learning does not necessarily mean paying a lot of money to spend several years in a classroom behind a desk to end up with a piece of paper. Adult learning takes many forms, has many outcomes and allows many different sorts of participation.

This is no better illustrated than through the Lifelong Learning programs developed and broadcast by 5UV Radio Adelaide. Established in 1972, Radio Adelaide, a community radio station owned and operated by Adelaide University, is considered by many to be the leading community radio station in Australia.

Radio Adelaide strongly promotes the idea that access to learning through life is a crucial social, cultural and economic force. There is also a strong belief in the importance of the emerging state and national links between community education and community radio in meeting this challenge.

"Along with news, current affairs, music, arts and cultural programs, Radio Adelaide now produces a range of programs structured and produced to assist listeners make sense of their lives," says Tony Ryan, Radio Adelaide's Executive Producer Lifelong Learning. "These initiatives aim to develop in listeners the skills and knowledge needed to survive in a changing and complex society".

The series are varied, responding to community needs and availability of funding. To date series include Aspects of Aging, The Law Spot, Pokies Blackjack and All That (a series on problem gambling), The Federation Files (the federation story in South Australia) and Wetlands Drylands, a 30-part series on Murray River ecology.

In addition, the unit produced The Learning Connection, a series of five programs profiling adult learners' stories, and broadcast across South Australia as part of Adult Learners Week 2001. This series presented case studies of adults who have returned to learning, as well as addressing issues such as the participation of men in adult learning and building learning communities.

Tony Ryan says that The Learning Connection highlights another very important aspect of this initiative. "In

most instances, some of our young aspiring radio producers who have completed our radio training programs, are involved in producing these programs. Not only does this provide them with an opportunity to contribute young and innovative ideas to the production process in the context of their first paid work in the sector; it also introduces them early in their broadcasting career to planning and producing radio programs of an educational nature, and in particular introduces them to the adult community education sector."

As well as broadcast on Radio Adelaide (101.5 on the FM band in metropolitan Adelaide), programs are distributed on CD to over 20 other community radio stations in South Australia, and select series are made available to a further 200 community radio stations nationally through the community radio satellite service in Sydney.

From each series, one or two programs are available on the internet as audio on demand – they can be accessed from www.radio.adelaide.edu.au – where further detailed information about program content can also be found. Increasingly as funding becomes available, programs will be transferred to CD format, giving them another life beyond the broadcast format, allowing them to serve as valuable tools to stimulate learning in more traditional, classroom-based, learning environments or else in forums such as workplace learning, learning circles or volunteer community organisations.

Several of the recent Lifelong Learning programs have won national or state awards. For example, *Enid's Story* in *Aspects of Ageing* gained national recognition in Canberra in October 2001 at the *Commonwealth Media and Advertising Awards – Real Images of Older Australians*.

The fifteen *Aspects of Ageing* programs explore various issues facing us as we age, including finding fulfillment in retirement, building a healthy and active lifestyle, gaining the benefits of today's technology and enjoying grandchildren. The series also looks at learning to managed the challenges of older life; the challenges of living alone, coping with social isolation, handing in the drivers' license, and learning how to take on the role of carer. This last subject was presented through three programs on the role of the carer as seen through the eyes of Enid, whose husband has Alzheimer's Disease.

Access and equity issues are another consideration. The Lifelong Learning programs give people who are unable or uncomfortable leaving their house, an opportunity to access quality learning opportunities. For many listeners, Tony Ryan believes that it is a process of 'education by stealth', but which can lead to increased interest in a topic or issue, and even lead to participation in related programs offered by local adult community education providers.

Elayne Neill, South Australian state Adult Learners Week coordinator, and Bill Lucas being interviewed for ABC Drivetime program in a mobile studio at the Adelaide show during Adult Learners Week 2001. (photo: John Cross)

A Registered Training Organisation since the mid-1990s, Radio Adelaide has also received many awards for its training programs for community radio broadcasters, including an Outstanding Program award during the South Australian Adult Learners Week 2001, for its role in the Statewide Community Broadcasters Training Program. And at Adult

Learning Australia's national conference in Melbourne in 1999, Training Coordinator Nicky Page accepted Radio Adelaide's award of the ALA Outstanding Training Provider of the Year.

While the Lifelong Learning strategy is still in its early days, in these times of change and uncertainty, Tony Ryan sees a revitalised role for the medium of radio in communities, and increasingly for community radio. "As we approach Radio Adelaide's 30th birthday celebrations (in June 2002) and in a world where certainties are daily becoming less certain, the educational role of this and other community radio stations is becoming more evident. This is particularly so when radio – now in its 100th year – is linked to the wonders of internet technology to provide new broadcast and online options for adult learning through the enduring medium of radio."

A NATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE BOOROONGEN DJUGUN COLLEGE

The organisations that provide training opportunities for Indigenous communities represent some of Australia's finest examples of community learning and action in practice. Programs are developed in close consultation with community members and are built around real community needs. Booroongen Djugun College represents an outstanding example of indigenous program development and the college was awarded the New South Wales State Adult Learners Week 2001 Award for Outstanding Provider of Programs for Indigenous Australians.

Booroongen Djugun College began its community-based programs in 1994 to support Aboriginal people gaining access to industry skills to allow them to become more competitive in the job market. The College offers accredited courses which are industry approved, nationally recognised and developed especially for indigenous students.

Booroongen Djugun College is part of the multi-faceted organisation of Booroongen Djugun Aboriginal Corporation and operates a centre-based service at Kempsey Campus, outreach training and distance learning. Training at the College is based on traditional aboriginal cultures, customs and language.

The College has recently opened a branch in Newcastle and has experienced substantial growth and development both in the range of services provided and the geographic spread of this provision. The College has increased its involvement in the community through a range of partnerships across the state.

Booroongen Djugun College aims to develop and consolidate its role as a national training centre. It will achieve

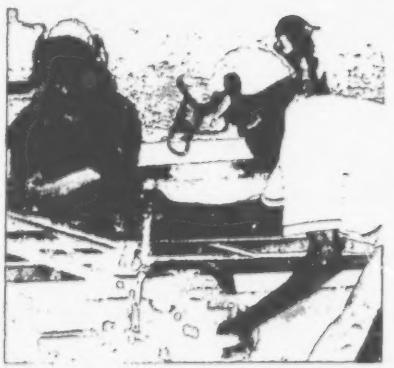
this by continuing to write its own courses, develop national models and adapt models developed elsewhere for use by Indigenous people.

A very important aspect of the College is that it provides an environment that reflects the culture of the learners. To this end, values, traditions and customs are an integral part of the training experience. Aboriginal English is recognised and acknowledged as the primary language for some of the people who undertake training at the College. The 'College Elders' are the catalysts behind the planning of cultural activities. Their involvement enables students to gain first hand experience of their Aboriginal history through visits to art sites, artefact scatters, bora grounds and living and open sites.

Booroongen Djugun College takes highly innovative approaches to course delivery as well as to the overall running of the College. For example, there is an emphasis on the Aboriginal methodology of learning. That means that learning encompasses audio, visual, demonstration, observation, hands-on, role-play as well as other approaches. There is student ownership of the College and Aboriginal Elders and community members have input into the running of the college, making it a true community college. The management, staff and students have a shared vision for the College and a positive self-identity is passed onto the students through cultural activities along with the achievement of industry skills.

Another important aspect of the College's success is the ongoing partnerships it has developed with such groups as the local Aboriginal community and local Aboriginal organisations as well as 'Many Rivers' Regional Council of ATSIC. Booroongen Djugun College has also forged relationships with NSW state government departments, unions and training advisory bodies.

Of significance is the partnerships the College has developed with the various schooling systems. By being involved in Vocational Education and Training, it is hoped that Aboriginal students 'at risk' of not completing a basic high school education may be encouraged to continue on with their education. The result has also been that Booroongen Djugun College has been selected as a finalist for 1999 and 2000 in the VET in Schools Excellence Award.



'Slabbing Timber – Chainsaw Training, Tiwi Islands' – Shortlisted entry in the ALW 2001 Ricoh Australia Photo Competition. (Tiwi Islands Training & Employment Board, Winnellie, NT Photo: William Knights)

CREATING A LEARNING COMMUNITY MORRISON HOUSE INC

Adult learning centres provide a valuable role in offering a range of flexible learning opportunities that suit all members of a community. But learning Centres can do more than provide courses, they often act as catalysts for community growth and cohesion. Once such centre, Morrison House, in Mt Evelyn, Victoria, has played a leading role in energising the town. Morrison House Inc was awarded the Adult Learners Week 2001 Victorian State Award for Outstanding Provider.

Morrison House, situated in Mt Evelyn, Victoria, has been in operation for 25 years. Innovation is one of the cornerstones of Morrison House and one of its most profound innovations was the decision, in 1998, to make Community Development their main focus.

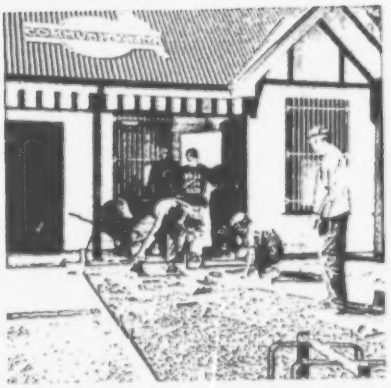
Morrison House spearheaded the development of the Mt Evelyn Township Improvement Committee through calling a public meeting to identify local issues. Morrison House has continued to take a leadership role on this committee, as well as providing experience, resources, staff and infrastructure support as required.

Integral to the Community Development focus was the adoption of the Lifelong Learning philosophy, the centre arguing that both Lifelong Learning and Community Development are intrinsically linked. It was this belief that gave birth to the idea of Mt Evelyn becoming a Learning Town.

The strategic objectives of this move were to strengthen the community through building partnerships, developing skills more by more closely identifying learning needs, and growing business by expanding networks, stimulating initiatives and improving skills of employees.

Morrison House has continued to develop projects both within the township and at the Morrison House base that enable learning to move beyond classroom parameters. This can be seen in projects like the development of the Outlook Community Park, the development of the Childcare Service Playgrounds, and the development of the Youth Park and Art Studio. The Centre also manages Community Link, a service which provides access to information and learning opportunities for residents and visitors alike.

With 44% of the Mt Evelyn population being under 25, it was natural for Morrison House to find numbers of disaffected youth appearing on its doorstep and so the Centre developed many programs that specifically serve the needs of this group. The Food Van project, for example, sees students managing a food van as a way to attain their Food Handler's Certificates. The Garden Development program involved students in landscaping areas around the centre for student use, and again, participants were able to gain accreditation in the process. Other projects in which the Morrison House has played a significant role included the development of the town's Skate Park and a community art project that taps into the talent of potential graffiti artists.



Landscaping work on the Community Link site in Mt Evelyn. Participants gain credits in the Horticulture 1 Certificate as part of a Morrison house program.
(photo: courtesy of Morrison House).

As Patrick Boucher, Co-founder of the Mount Evelyn Youth Action Group comments, "Morrison House is a corner-stone in our community, acting as the nucleus for a number of community groups and organisations such as the Mount Evelyn Township Improvement Committee, the Mount Evelyn Environment Protection and Progress Association, and many more. Without access to the staff and resources provided by Morrison House I often wonder if any of the groups would have made it as far as what they have."

Many of these projects have brought the centre into close collaboration with the local shire. "Morrison House plays a critical role in improving people's access to opportunities and promoting a sense of belonging and community pride in our town. In partnership with the shire, Morrison House has played a leading role in developing an innovative township development model" says Deputy Mayor, James Merlino.

Drawing from its experiences, Morrison House has worked with the Shire of Yarra Ranges to develop a Community Toolkit and a Framework for Action that will be used by Morrison House to workshop the concepts with other groups in the Shire. Community Houses are well placed to work alongside Local government and other community leaders to facilitate Lifelong Learning and cohesive communities.

Morrison House also develops materials for its learning programs. The books produced for one program – material that supports students with low literacy levels – have been purchased for use overseas. Other programs developed by the centre have focused on issues associated with gambling, have provided support for students with intellectual disabilities and have worked to include people with psychiatric illness.

More than simply providing courses, Morrison House has played an integral role in enhancing the life of the Mt Evelyn community.

SMART GEELONG THE LEARNING CITY

A Learning City is one where industry, education, business and the community combine in a commitment to lifelong learning. A Learning City is a city that integrates economic, social and environmental development. A commitment to lifelong learning makes for a prosperous community, both in terms of economics and of lifestyle. Businesses will want to come to a place where people are skilled, innovative and able to skill for change. In December 2000, the Mayor of Geelong declared the City a Learning City, and during Adult Learners Week 2001 Geelong staged numerous displays and learning events as well as hosting a lunch for Bill Lucas.

In Victoria, the learning city concept has been recognised by government as a vital tool in fostering lively and productive rural and regional communities. Victoria's State government is now piloting nine Learning Towns and Cities. Geelong Adult Training and Education (GATE) Inc was successful in bidding for this project and is the lead agency for the SmartGeelong Network. Together, these agencies plan activities to promote and extend learning opportunities in partnership with

Dr Michael (Mick) Dodson
Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIC)

Most people who think their learning is over after they finish formal education are pretty boring people. I like to think I'm not boring.

I see learning as part of the ongoing pursuit of knowledge. I try to learn at least one thing now each day. Reading helps a lot. Learning just makes me feel better. It is part of the lifetime of personal development. I have been trying for years to learn Spanish.

the many established educational, business and community organisations in our community.

The four main objectives of SmartGeelong are: to raise community awareness of the importance of lifelong learning; to elevate education as a key attraction for choosing Geelong as a lifestyle destination; to increase participation in learning (particularly for the 20-30% of the community that is not actively engaged in learning); and to increase funding and business opportunities through collaboration.

Geelong's sheer size has posed a considerable challenge in the pursuit of making the city a Learning City. With a population of 180 000, it was important that as many views were heard as possible. To this end, the Learning City Advisory Group was established. Members for this group were recruited strategically from a broad range of the educational and business communities, along with local government. At another level, each project has a steering committee, with different members from the Advisory Group. This way, more people are involved in the Learning City and these people can then influence others to become involved.

In 2001, the Geelong Learning Festival was held during Adult Learners Week. A focus of the Festival was to extend people's participation in learning by providing information in settings where people are already, rather than restricting the settings to formal education institutions. Not only does this make learning more accessible but it also celebrates learning via engaging and fun activities in an informal environment. An example of this was the mobile computer gym provided courtesy of 'TAFE Frontiers' which visited community centres.

A highlight of the Geelong Learning Festival was the visit by Bill Lucas, Chair of the UK Campaign for Learning, who was the international guest of Adult Learning Australia for Adult Learners Week. This event was Bill's only stopover in Victoria and Geelong was specifically chosen because it is a declared Learning City. The presentation Bill delivered provided the Learning City with an opportunity to stage a high-profile event that attracted a lunchtime audience of over 80 representatives from the business community, local government, community organisations, educational providers and the general public.

The wholehearted support of the Geelong Chamber of Commerce immediately aligned the business community with the project and provided many avenues for the promotion of lifelong learning as a strategy in building communities. The challenge for the project now is to continue to build on the commitment of individual businesses to cascade everyday learning into the culture of the wider business community – especially small business. The framework of the Learning City has been successful in overcoming barriers between traditionally competitive organisations; barriers have been replaced by collaboration.

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ADDRESSING ADULT LEARNERS' NEEDS
KANGAN BATMAN TAFE

The provision of learning opportunities to older adults presents very different challenges to the provision of education to younger students. The provision of education for indigenous students also requires adaptation, sensitivity and flexibility in terms of learning delivery. Kangan Batman TAFE in Victoria has spent a lot of time addressing these challenges. Kangan Batman TAFE was the recipient of the Adult Learners Week 2001 National Reconciliation Learning Program Award for its "Live Theatre Cultural Training" staff development program developed by the Koori Programs Unit. The Adult Learners Week Victorian State Award for Outstanding Learner was given to Ekaterini Dammo, who commenced studies at Kangan Batman TAFE as a mature-aged student in ESL and 'New Beginnings for Women' classes, and recently completed her Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) through the TAFE.

Greg Fryer from the Koori Program unit, Kangan Batman TAFE (left) with Dr Peter Hollingworth at the National Launch of Adult Learners Week, National Museum of Australia, Canberra. (photo: Eddie Misic)

Kangan Batman TAFE is a Victorian multi-discipline TAFE institute. With five of its six campuses located in the north-western region of Melbourne, it primarily services a population of over five hundred thousand, although many of its 33,000 students are drawn from all over Victoria. Kangan Batman TAFE provides vocational courses in a broad range of occupations, and is Victoria's major training provider for the automotive, aerospace and polymer industries. Kangan Batman TAFE is also Victoria's largest provider of trainee/apprenticeship training, VET in Schools and corrections education.

Kangan Batman TAFE was established in 1997 through the amalgamation of the John Batman Institute of TAFE, one of the largest Victorian automotive training providers, and Kangan Institute of TAFE, a generalist institute with specialisations in aerospace, polymer engineering, and curriculum research and design. In 1998, Kangan Batman TAFE was further expanded with the acquisition of the Richmond Automotive Campus of Barton Institute of TAFE, making the institute's School of Automotive the largest provider of automotive industry training in Australia.

While many of Kangan Batman's students are young adults coming to the TAFE straight from compulsory education, the TAFE also has a significant population of mature-aged students, adults who are returning to study often after having a long break from it. "At Kangan Batman TAFE we pride ourselves in treating adults as individuals. We work hard to treat them with respect and appropriate understanding. It is a big step for an adult to re-engage with learning and we must be mindful of this and provide a welcoming environment that recognises their life's experience," says John Parish, Director of Kangan Batman TAFE.

In serving the mature-aged audience, Kangan Batman TAFE, like most providers of adult learning, faces two major challenges – the first is to

attract students, the second is to keep them enrolled.

To answer the first challenge, the TAFE uses the successes of current mature-aged students to inspire potential students. "In terms of our marketing, we have developed promotional materials specifically targeted at the mature-age student. We produce a publication called 'Ordinary People Doing Extraordinary Things', featuring profiles of some of our mature-age students as role models for prospective students."

But attracting adults back to study is not enough – keeping them is another challenge. "Mature-aged students are more demanding in terms of their expectations of customer service, as they are usually busy people who don't want to waste time. At Kangan Batman it has been a priority to streamline our customer service, by providing a one-stop service for all student needs, from initial inquiry to enrolment, to accessing support services while studying."

"And like most providers, we have placed a high importance on developing our flexible and online learning capabilities. Because, while many students still need the personal touch of face-to-face delivery, flexible learning is becoming particularly popular with mature-age students."

Another challenge for Kangan Batman TAFE has been to provide learning opportunities for its indigenous students through creating an environment that respects the student's cultural needs. "The area we service – Broadmeadows and the surrounding areas – is home to indigenous people from all over Australia, with different levels of education and literacy and numeracy skills. High unemployment is also a problem and many are from disadvantaged backgrounds", explains Koori Programs Unit Manager Terry Kildea.

"We have found the challenge is not only to get people into education, but to keep them in the routine of study, so they can complete their course and continue on the pathway to employment or further education."

Kangan Batman's Koori Programs Unit was established in 1991 and is guided by a Koori Consultative Committee, which comprises current students and Elders from the Koori Community. The Koori Programs Unit provides support for indigenous students who are completing mainstream TAFE courses, as well as offering programs to meet the specific educational needs of indigenous people (such as the Coorong Tongala Koori Education course, which includes indigenous culture, literacy, numeracy and computer skills). There are also plans to expand the unit to become Australia's premier indigenous community learning centre.

"Kangan Batman TAFE is pleased to allocate the resources for a new facility because we see education as playing a crucial role in the reconciliation process, by assisting the indigenous community to have the same opportunities and quality of life as all Australians," says Mr Parish.

"Our strategic plan has been developed in consultation with all staff in the Koori Programs Unit and Elders from the local Koori community. One of its key aims is to address the obstacles that are currently preventing some students from completing their courses. For example, we are planning to implement a formal mentoring program for all of our students, and also overcome the more basic problems such as lack of transport by establishing our own bus service", Mr Kildea said.

One of the many initiatives of the unit has been to provide cross-cultural training for Kangan Batman TAFE staff to raise awareness and understanding of indigenous issues and the Koori Programs Unit. One element of this strategy, the 'Live Theatre Cultural Training' program

'Bowled Out!' – Shortlisted entry in the ALW 2001 Ricoh Australia Photo Competition. (Spencer Institute of TAFE, Port Lincoln, SA. Photo: Gyn Hyde)

developed by the Koori Programs Unit of Kangan Batman TAFE, offers an effective model for raising awareness of indigenous culture and facilitating reconciliation that can be used by educational organisations across Australia.

The program takes the form of a live theatre performance, entitled 'You Gammon or What?", designed to raise awareness of indigenous issues among teachers and facilitators. The use of theatre performance is in itself an innovative approach to staff development, as is the use of humour and satire throughout the performance. The performance is made up of a series of skits performed and written by members of the Koori Programs Unit based on their personal experiences as indigenous Australians.

The program's title – "You Gammon or What?" – comes from the expression 'gammon', which was used around the time of the First Fleet to mean joking or teasing, and is still used by Koori people today. The title was chosen because the performance used humour and satire to address serious issues, such as the racism and discrimination experienced by indigenous Australians.

The performance is followed by an open forum, in which audience members are encouraged to ask questions of the performers and other members of the Koori community in attendance. The forum provides an opportunity to dispel misconceptions, ranging from the most basic myth that all indigenous Australians know how to play the didgeridoo, to the perception that they know all about the culture of Aboriginal people from other areas of Australia.

PART VI

ADULT LEARNERS WEEK

WHAT IS ADULT LEARNERS WEEK ALL ABOUT?

Adult Learners Week (ALW) is the national flagship celebration and promotion of adult learning opportunities in Australia.

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The purpose of Adult Learners Week is to:

- Build upon the positive recognition of 'learning' that already exists within the community to increase the profile of adult learning in Australia;
- Celebrate and promote the value of learning for the community and for individuals as a means of gaining fulfillment in all their endeavours;
- Celebrate and promote the diversity of learning opportunities for adults;
- Reach out to those who are marginalised from learning;
- Forge and nurture relationships among learning providers;
- Encourage further investment in learning by all Australians for all Australians.

Adult Learners Week celebrates the concept of adult learning in the broadest possible sense, encompassing the full diversity of formal and informal learning options, outcomes and learning pathways available.

In Australia, the Week is coordinated on three levels. At its core the Week consists of many hundreds of activities presented by learning providers around the country. These activities – open days, sample classes, performances, shopping mall displays, competitions – present an opportunity for members of the local community to find out what learning options are available to them. No learning provider needs a formal invitation, nor official permission, to stage an Adult Learners Week activity, and there is an online calendar, website resources and promotional materials available for use by learning providers free-of-charge to assist in the staging and promotion of Adult Learners Week activities.

The launch of the City of Marion Learning Festival held during ALW 2001 throughout the Westfiled Shopping Centre, Marion. (photo: Mark Trumble)

State and Territory governments each appoint an Adult Learners Week Coordinator. State and Territory governments present larger-scale events such as state launches, award ceremonies and seminars.

The Week is coordinated nationally by a National Coordination team at Adult Learning Australia (ALA). Using a grant from the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA), the National Coordination team consults widely to establish the theme and direction for the Week each year. The National Coordination team builds the framework around which learning providers can build their activities. Materials are produced and disseminated by the National Coordination team to raise awareness for the Week and provide support learning provider activities. The National Coordination team also coordinates national competitions, awards, the official website and the tour of guest speakers.

ADULT LEARNERS WEEK 2001
A SUMMARY OF MAJOR ACTIVITIES

Most Adult Learners Week activities are open days, displays, demonstrations, free classes, morning teas and other activities organised and presented by learning centres around the country. In 2001 there were over 530 Adult Learners Week activities entered on the official Adult Learners Week online calendar.

A number of Adult Learners Week activities are organised at a state or national level. A summary of these Adult Learners Week 2001 events are as follows:

Saturday 1 September

- Queensland Launch of Adult Learners Week and awards presentation, Bowen

Monday 3 September

- National Launch of Adult Learners Week, Canberra
- Tasmanian Launch of Adult Learners Week and Awards presentation, Clarendon Vale
- NSW Adult Learners Week Launch and awards ceremony, Sydney
- South Australia Adult Learners Week launch, Adelaide
- Audiographic Seminar 'Making Connections, Past & Present, Rural & Urban', Queensland
- Breakfast: "Switching People Back onto Learning" with Adult Learners Week guest speaker Bill Lucas, Perth
- Breakfast Seminar: "The Economics of Illiteracy" with Adult Learners Week guest speaker Wesley Payne McClendon Jr., Ballarat
- Lecture: "Build Your Community: Turn on Learning" with Adult Learners Week guest speaker Bill Lucas, Perth
- Seminar: "The Economics of Illiteracy" with Adult Learners Week guest speaker Wesley Payne McClendon Jr., Melbourne

Tuesday 4 September

- WA Adult Learners Week Awards presentations, Perth
- Breakfast: "The Business Case for Learning" with Adult Learners Week guest speaker Bill Lucas, Adelaide
- Seminar: "The Irresistible Rise of Lifelong Learning" with Adult Learners Week guest speaker Bill Lucas, Adelaide
- Video Conference to Regional Victoria: "The Economics of Illiteracy" with Adult Learners Week guest speaker Wesley Payne McClendon Jr.
- Lunch: "The changing learning requirements of the 21st Century workforce" with Adult Learners Week guest speaker, Wesley Payne McClendon Jr., Melbourne
- ACT Adult Learners Week Awards Night and Dinner, CIT Canberra

Wednesday 5 September

- Official celebration and Victorian Awards presentation, Melbourne
- Lunch: "Switching People Back onto Learning" with Adult Learners Week guest speaker Bill Lucas, Geelong
- Breakfast: "Organisational Learning" with Adult Learners Week guest speaker Wesley Payne McClendon Jr., Sydney
- Seminar: "Organisational Change and Learning: A View from the USA" with Adult Learners Week guest speaker Wesley Payne McClendon Jr., Sydney
- Role Reversal Media Event, featuring Chris Uhlmann (ABC Radio), Catriona Jackson (The Canberra Times), Richard Perno (2CC) and Mr Bill Stefaniak MLA with Neville O'Neill and a team of Indigenous Media students, Canberra
- South Australia Adult Learners Week Awards ceremony and

Launch of 'A Guide to Adult Learning Opportunities in South Australia 2001, Adelaide

Thursday 6 September

- Adult Learners Week National Seminar: 'A Learning Society. What will it be like? How can we make it happen?', Sydney. Speakers: Robert Fitzgerald, Elaine Henry, Jenny Morawska-Ahearn, Geraldine Doogue, Bill Lucas, Wesley Payne McCelndon Jr, Kaye Schofield and Phil Candy

Friday 7 September

- Lunch: "The Irresistible Rise of Lifelong Learning" with Adult Learners Week guest speaker Bill Lucas, Sydney
- Sydney Community College Adult Learners Week Awards Night: Bob Frew Memorial Oration given by Adult Learners Week guest speaker Bill Lucas, Sydney
- Lunch: "Organisational Change and Learning: A View from the USA" with Adult Learners Week guest speaker Wesley Payne McClendon Jr., Canberra

Saturday 8 September

- International Literacy Day Morning Tea: "Celebrating Volunteer Literacy Tutors" with Adult Learners Week guest speaker Bill Lucas, Brisbane
- NT Vocational Training and Adult Learners Week Awards presentations, Darwin

Week-long activities

- Online forum and report: 'Making Connections: Past and Present, Rural and Urban. The Development of Adult Education in Queensland'
- Book: "Learning Journey Stories" - Celebrating Adult Learning in Rural and Remote Queensland

COLLINS BOOKSELLERS WRITING COMPETITION

Bill Lucas speaking at the Industry Breakfast during Adult Learners Week Hilton Hotel, Adelaide. (photo: Mark Trumble)

Winners

Elizabeth Cooke from Port Macquarie NSW, for 'An autumn flower'

Kirstie D'Souza from Harbord NSW, for 'My life as a loser'.

The winners each received a $500 Collins Booksellers Voucher courtesy of Collins Booksellers.

Shortlisted

- Gregory Bogaerts, NSW
- Megan Chappell, NSW
- Bill Clohesy, Vic
- Joan Darnell, Qld
- Catherine James, Vic
- Andrea Mettenmeyer, NSW
- Frances Overheu, WA
- Megan Rowe, NSW
- Rananda Rich, NSW
- Tony Smith, NSW
- Carmel Williams, Vic

Postcards promoting Adult Learners Week 2001 competitions. (design: green advertising)

RICOH AUSTRALIA PHOTO COMPETITION

Winners

Gail Morse from Elwood, Victoria, for 'Adults Learning to Sculpt'

Valentina Vervich from Bundoora, Victoria, for 'The Neverending Story Writing All Stars'

The Winners each received a RDC 6000 Digital Camera, courtesy of Ricoh Australia.

Shortlisted

- Penny Argyle, WA
- Mia Barone, Vic
- Sam Camilleri, Vic
- Jenny Clark, WA
- Jim Finlayson, SA
- Colin Efremidis, Vic
- Erica Forrest, NSW
- Tess Follett, Vic
- Barbara Glover, NSW
- Narelle Grace, NSW
- Victoria Grant, NSW
- Charles Hardimon, NSW
- Gynn Hyde, SA
- Glenys Hodgson, Vic
- Mike Jones, WA
- William Knights, NT
- Lynne Matheson, Vic
- Nadine Murray, WA
- Susan Oxenham, NSW
- Cath Renwick, ACT
- Maureen Rutlidge, NSW
- Karina Savage, Vic
- Pieter Scott, SA
- Timothy Schaafsma, NSW
- Timothy Smith, Tas
- Judy Stampton, Vic
- Judy Stanton, Vic
- Geraldine Zeccola, Vic

Inside the Learning Shop, Marion Westfield Shopping Centre, South Australia. (photo: Mark Trumble)

ADULT LEARNERS WEEK 2001 AWARD WINNERS

ALW 2001 National Award Winners

- Reconciliation Learning Program Award – The Koori Programs Unit, Kangan Batman TAFE for their "Live Theatre Cultural Training" staff development program
- Community Learning Leader Award - Diversity Directions Inc for their "Let's Play Fair: A Guide to Helping Young Children Tackle Prejudice" program

ALW 2001 State Award Winners: ACT

- Outstanding Learner – Rhonda Obad
- Outstanding Tutor – Lorna Crane, Belconnen Open Art
- Outstanding Program – Full Esteem Ahead, Work Resources Centre
- Outstanding Program (Highly Commended) – Diploma of Community Services (Disability Work), Centrelink Virtual College

ALW 2001 State Award Winners: Northern Territory

- Outstanding Learner – Nanette Burns, Darwin TRAC Association
- Outstanding Tutor – Robyn Ellis, Centre for Appropriate Technology, Alice Springs
- Outstanding Provider – Darwin TRAC Association
- Outstanding Program – Tiwi Music Program, Tiwi Islands Community & Catholic Education
- Outstanding Program (Highly Commended) – Mapuru First Reader: Developing appropriate teaching materials, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (Nhulunbuy)

ALW 2001 State Award Winners: New South Wales

- Outstanding Learner – Robyn Turner
- Outstanding Provider – Central West Community College
- Outstanding Provider (Merit Certificate) – Alstonville Adult Learning Association
- Outstanding Tutor – Joan Johnson
- Outstanding Program – Shared Stories, Shares Lives
- Outstanding Program (Merit Certificate) – Computer and Internet Training Course for Over 65's: Workers Educational Association Illawarra
- Outstanding Indigenous Learner – Carmel Knight
- Outstanding Provider of Programs for Indigenous Australians – Booroongen Djugun College

ALW 2001 State Award Winners: Queensland

- Outstanding Program – Adult Tertiary Preparation Program, Open Learning Institute of TAFE
- Outstanding Provider – Capricorn Community Radio 4 You
- Outstanding Tutor – Jason Learner
- Outstanding Learner – Craig Sinn

ALW 2001 State Award Winners: South Australia

- Outstanding Learner – Wendy Wassenaar
- Outstanding Learner – Kym Hunt
- Outstanding Learner – Kevin Coulthard
- Outstanding Learner – Alma Christopherson
- Outstanding Tutor – Stephen Hanel, Pooraka Farm Neighbourhood House
- Outstanding Tutor – Jacinta Ryan, Port Lincoln Campus, Spencer Institute of TAFE
- Outstanding Tutor – Brenton Gambling, Port Pirie Campus, Spencer Institute of TAFE
- Outstanding Tutor – Joyce Fitzpatrick, Sandwriters,Goolwa
- Outstanding Program – Floristry Program, Torrens Valley Institute of TAFE

- Outstanding Program – Nunga Wiltja Project, Bungala CDEP, Spencer Institute of TAFE & Bungala Aboriginal Corporation
- Outstanding Program – Statewide Accredited Community Radio Trainers Network, 5UV Radio Adelaide and the South Australian Community Broadcasters Association
- Outstanding Program – Taxi Training Program, Overseas Chinese Association
- Outstanding Provider – Marra Dreaming
- Outstanding Provider – Adult Community Education Program, Torrens Valley Campus, Torrens Valley Institute of TAFE
- Outstanding Provider – Adult Community Education Program, Kadina Campus, Spencer Institute of TAFE

ALW 2001 State Award Winners: Tasmania

- Outstanding Learner – Eilidh St John
- Outstanding Learner (Merit Certificate) – Jodie Taylor
- Outstanding Learner (Merit Certificate) – Christine Devlyn
- Outstanding Tutor – Jane Brown
- Outstanding Tutor (Merit Certificate) – Peter Stevenson
- Outstanding Program – Tasmanian Prison and Education Training Program
- Outstanding Program – Young Mothers Program (Claremont College)
- Outstanding Provider – Huon Open Learning Centre
- Outstanding Provider (Merit Certificate) – Tasmanian Communities Online
- The State Library of Tasmania Community Organisation ALW 2001 Award (for contributions to literacy) – Clarendon Vale Neighbourhood House

ALW 2001 State Award Winners: Victoria

- Outstanding Learner – Ekaterini Dammo
- Outstanding Program – The Safer Communities Program presented by The Wangaratta Centre for Continuing Education Inc.
- Outstanding Provider – BRACE Inc.
- Outstanding Provider – Morrison House Inc
- Outstanding Tutor – Ros Butcher

ALW 2001 State Award Winners: Western Australia

- Outstanding Learner – Lynette Carnes
- Outstanding Older Learner – Janusz Zejdler
- Outstanding Group of Learners – The Craft and Chat Learning Group, Milligan House, Bunbury
- Outstanding Community Provider – Boyup Brook Telecentre
- Outstanding Registered Training Organisation – Council on the Ageing (COTA)
- Outstanding Tutor (Volunteer) – Cathy Rainey
- Outstanding Tutor (Volunteer) – Fr Robert Frank Hanson
- Outstanding Tutor (Paid) – Lillian Mincham
- Outstanding Ongoing Program – Skills for Nature Conservation
- Outstanding Program (New Initiative) – Filling in the Gaps Program, Koorda Telecentre and Koorda Learning Centre
- Outstanding Service Contribution – Kath Napier
- Outstanding Service Contribution – Merle Henning

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ADULT LEARNERS WEEK 2001 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people contributed to making Adult Learners Week 2001 an outstanding success.

ADULT LEARNERS WEEK 2001 NATIONAL COORDINATION

Adult Learners Week National Campaign Sponsors

- The Australian National Training Authority (ANTA)
- Green Advertising
- Collins Booksellers
- Ricoh Australia

Adult Learners Week 2001 National Coordination Team

Management

- Project Management: Tony Brown, Adult Learning Australia
- National Coordinator: John Cross, Adult Learning Australia
- Project Officer: Jennie Della, Adult Learning Australia

Promotional Campaign

- Account Executive: Karina West, Green Advertising
- Creative Director: Michael Honey, Green Advertising
- Designer: Emma Jackman, Green Advertising
- Community Service Announcement Production: Les Herstik, Green Advertising
- Photography: Eddie Misic, Eddison Photographics
- Video: Geoff Ellis
- Sound: Joe Kobier
- Website Design: Michael Honey and Daniel Edmonds, Green Advertising
- Website hosting: Duncan Crombie, Chirp

Media Liaison

- Media strategy: Marilyn Chalkley & Michael Cavanagh, Chalkley Consulting
- Media Support: Penny Philp and Alex Roose, Chalkley Consulting

Adult Learners Week 2001 National Steering Committee

- Ned Dennis, Adult Learning Australia (Chair)
- Tony Brown, Adult Learning Australia
- Denise McDonald, Department of Education, Employment and Training (Victoria)
- Liz Keyes, ANTA
- Merial Clark, Assoc. of Neighbourhood Houses & Learning Centres
- Rex Hewitt, Australian Education Union
- Carmel Kostos, Australian Institute of Training & Development
- Anthony Stiff, Business Services ITAB
- John Wills, Centre of Adult Education (Victoria)
- Michael Johnson, Department of Education, Training & Youth Affairs
- Cathryn McKenzie, Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia
- Ian Watts, Museums Australia Education Group
- Mary Dickie, Quay Connections
- Sue Ross, Office of Vocational Education and Training, Department of Education, Training & Employment (South Australia)
- Jane Morgan, TAFE Directors Australia
- Lesley Harrison, Bachelor Adult and Vocational Education, University of Tasmania

Adult Learners Week 2001 National Award and Competition judges

- Len Barratt
- Jennifer Newman
- Agnes Shea
- Rick Flowers
- Rosemary Neal
- Dorothy Lucardie
- Penny Boyer
- Michael Thorne
- Garry Traynor
- Jane Sampson
- Barbara Pamphilon
- Stephen Matthews

The Adult Learners Week 2001 National Coordination team would like to thank

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- The two international guests – Bill Lucas and Wesley Payne McClendon Jr, who took time out of their busy schedules to subject themselves to a gruelling tour of Australia during Adult Learners Week and share their wisdom about, and their passion, for learning–for free;
- The Friends and Patron of Adult Learners Week for giving their support;
- Members of Adult Learning Australia (ALA), ALA Branch management

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- The entrants to the Collins Writing Competition and the Ricoh Australia Photo competition who shared their learning experiences and insights with us;
- The many organisations who displayed and/or distributed the Adult Learners Week 2001 promotional materials;
- And, finally, a big thank you to everybody who took part in Adult Learners Week either by presenting or by attending an Adult Learners Week event.

ADULT LEARNERS WEEK 2001 STATE COORDINATION

ACT

State Coordinator

Ellie Thompson, Work Resources Centre

With thanks to:

- The ACT Advisory Council on Adult and Community Education (ACE) and the ALW 2001 Sub-Committee: Bruce Duke, Bill Palmer, Sharon Carter, Derek Arkle, Margaret Carmody
- The Office of Training and Adult Education (OTAE) – Franco Dal Pozzo and Kim Edwards,
- Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) ;and
- Mr Neville O'Neill – Indigenous Arts Officer, ACT and Indigenous Media Students.

NSW

State Coordinator

Katherine Lopez
NSW Board of Adult & Community Education

With thanks to:

- Dr Roger Morris, ALA (NSW Branch)
- Ron Anderson, ALA (NSW Branch)
- Kaye Schofield, Chair, NSW Board of Adult & Community Education
- Sam Thomas, Director, Adult and Community Education
- Amanda Moore, Adult and Community Education
- Tony Burke, Bankstown Community College
- Gloria Provest, Department of Education and Training
- Denise Taylor, Board of Adult & Community Education
- Mary Lee, Board of Adult & Community Education

VIC

State Coordinator

Stephen D'Arcy, Department of Education, Employment and Training, Victoria

With thanks to:

- Adult, Community & Further Education (ACFE) Board
- ACFE Regional Chairs, Regional Directors, and Regional staff
- Rowena Allsop, Melissa Arch, Tamara Bickford, Denise Macdonald, Kim Hamilton, Alison Lanigan, and Helen Masters, DEET
- Christopher Carroll, Rachel Castles, Ned Dennis, Mayella McGrath, and Bernadette O'Connor, ALA - Victorian Branch
- Merial Clark, Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres
- Sherry Cooper Smith, Centre for Adult Education
- Lesley Crommelin, ACFE Regional Chair
- Trish Curtis, ACFE Regional Provider Support Officer
- Simon Dalton, Karen Jakubec, and Elly Prodromou, Immigration Museum
- Joan Druyer, Colac Adult & Community Education
- Anne Dunn and Christine Malahar, Preston Reservoir Adult Community Education
- Linda Fleet, Adult Multicultural Education Services
- Margaret Griffiths, Melbourne Museum
- Pam Miller, Monash University
- John Mitchell, U3A Network
- Beata Peisker, ACFE Regional Director
- John Shugg, ACE Vic
- Rosalie Staggard, Australian TAFE Marketing Association
- Trevor Tonkin, Continuing Education Bendigo
- Kaye Vrieze, Narre Community Learning Centre
- Ian Watts, Museums Australia

TAS

State Coordinator

Maggie Aird, Equity Standards Branch, Tasmanian Department of Education

With thanks to:

- Annie Archer
- Sharon Stewart
- Glynis Flower
- Hilary Keeley
- Noela Foxcroft
- Irena Blissenden
- Lyn Webster
- Jeff Ridley
- Coralita
- Mark Thomas
- Peter Bond
- Alison O'May
- Hon Paula Wriedt MHA
- Doug Manser
- Clarendon Vale Neighborhood House
- Tasmanian Friends of ALW 2001

- Adult Education
- Tasmanian Association of Community Houses
- ALA – Tasmanian Branch

SA

State Coordinator

Elayne Neill, South Australia Department of Education, Training & Employment

Jan Peterson (from July), South Australia Department of Education, Training & Employment

With thanks to:

- 5UV Radio Adelaide
- Adelaide Convention Centre
- Adelaide Institute of TAFE
- Adelaide Institute of TAFE – Arts Centre
- Adelaide Institute of TAFE – English Language Services
- Adult Community Education Council
- Adult Learning Australia – South Australia
- Aged Care & Housing Group
- Anthea Beattie
- Anthony Millowick
- ASK Employment Services
- Australian Institute of Exports (SA)
- Bagster Community House
- Cathy Clennell
- Centre for Lifelong Learning and Development
- Douglas Mawson Institute of TAFE
- English Language Services
- Family and Youth Services
- Friends of the Botanic Gardens
- Helping Hand Aged Care
- Heta Incorporated
- Information Industries Training Advisory Board
- Jack Young Centre
- Jamfactory Contemporary Craft and Design
- Jenni Worth
- Kadina Institute of TAFE
- Marie Beardsley's College of Beauty Specialists
- Maxima Training Services
- Meg Richens
- Nail Technician School of SA
- National Wine Education and Training Centre
- Northern Regional Development Board
- Overseas Chinese Association
- Pooraka Farm Neighbourhood House
- Professional and Community Education – Onkaparinga Institute of TAFE
- Professional and Continuing Education – Adelaide University
- Regency Institute of TAFE
- Riverton & Districts High School
- SA Council for Adult Literacy
- SA Training & Development Group
- Sir Joseph Banks College
- Southern Mallee Community Education Group
- Southern Theatre and Arts Supporters
- Spencer Institute of TAFE
- The Learning Laboratory
- The Quality Training Company
- Torrens Valley Institute of TAFE
- Torrens Valley Institute of TAFE – ACE Program
- Valerie Lillington
- Vocational Education, Employment & Training Board
- Workers' Educational Association of SA (WEA)
- Yorke Peninsula Employment

WA

State Coordinator

Ali Summer, (to June) Community Relations Unit, Western Australia Department of Training

Eugenie Harris (from June), Community Relations Unit, Western Australia Department of Training

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- Sarah Dye, Department of Training
- Marie Matthews, Seniors Recreation Council
- Wendy Hackett, MALA
- Neil Carver-Smith, Adult Learning Australia
- Debbie Rice, WA Telecentre Support Network
- Viv Ducie, Learning Centre Link
- Merle Henning
- Hans van Leeuwen
- Wendy Grimston, Read Write Now!
- Tracee Kirk, Read Write Now!
- Helen Beresford, West Coast Lifelong Learning
- Ros Bishop, Challenger TAFE
- Sue Crock, Adult Learning Australia
- Wendy Shearwood, Adult Learning Australia
- Karen Reynolds, UWA Extension

NT

State Coordinator

Coralie Achterberg, Northern Territory Employment and Training Authority

QLD

State Coordinator

Nicole Oakey, Queensland Department of Employment and Training

With thanks to:

- Anne Gooley, Chief Executive Learning Network Queensland
- Penny Claringbull, Coordinator Bowen Learning Network Queensland Centre
- Helen Schwencke, President Lifelong Learning Council Queensland Inc. formerly Adult Learning Australia (Queensland Branch) Inc
- Ann Kelly, President Queensland Council for Adult Literacy

Adult Learners Week is coordinated Nationally by Adult Learning Australia using a grant from the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA).

Adult Learning Australia (ALA)

Originally formed in 1960, Adult Learning Australia (ALA) is the peak body for adult learning providers and facilitators and a voice for adult learners. The ALA mission is to:

- Represent the interests of adult learners;
- Work toward a learning society in which everyone has access to opportunities for learning throughout life in formal, non-formal and informal settings;
- Collaborate with organisations, institutions and individuals concerned with adult learning to advocate for lifelong learning;
- Inform all those interested ion the field of adult learning through writing, exchange, discussion and professional development;
- Help build learning communities, with the understanding that learning is central to the process of community development; and
- Celebrate the joy of learning.

Apart from the national co-ordination of Adult Learners Week, ALA also co-ordinates The Dial (an online directory of Adult Learning), manages Learning Circles Australia (a radical tool to facilitate informal learning manages a number of online forums), produces several publications and presents conferences annually.

For more information about ALA or its activities, visit www.ala.asn.au

The Australian National Training Authority (ANTA)

The Australian National Training Authority – ANTA – is a Commonwealth statutory authority providing a national focus for vocational education and training. Vocational education and training (VET) is 'education and training for work'. It exists to develop and recognise the competencies or skills of learners.

ANTA manages several national initiatives, which have been agreed by all States, Territories and the Commonwealth, that help to achieve the goals of the vocational education and training system across Australia.

Principle among its roles, ANTA manages the National Training Framework (NTF) which is made up of the Australian Quality Training Framework arrangements together with Training Packages. The NTF is intended to be a nationally consistent system that enables registered training organisations to:

- provide flexible and responsive training and assessment services for Australian enterprises to compete in a global environment;
- provide individuals with opportunities to optimise their potential; and
- issue qualifications that are nationally recognised.

ANTA administers funding to facilitate the expansion of the VET in Schools program, supports a number of professional development programs, manages programs to implement equity principles, and undertakes extensive market research which is made available to the learning community.

To find out more about ANTA, its programs and priorities visit www.anta.gov.au

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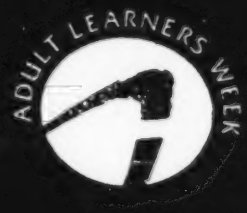

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